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Netanyahu and Clinton, portrait of the week by **Bahgory** 8

Fighting back

EGYPTIAN diplomats at the United Nations have disclosed that the Arab group and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will work together to counter the US veto in the Security *Council blocking the con*demnation of Israel's settlement policy in East Jerusalem, reports **Hoda Tawfik** from New York. The diplomats spoke of a draft resolution, being circulated among General Assembly members, urging *the secretary-general to dis*patch a UN observer to the Occupied Territories, including Jerusalem.

A group of NAM ministers in New *Delhi* this week, called on Tuesday for an emergency session of the General Assembly to demand a stop of all Israeli settlement activities.

The 113-member NAM is*sued a special statement* on the Middle East at the end of its ministerial meeting. The statement calls for UN member states to impose an economic boycott on Israeli companies operating in the occupied Palestinian territories, and on NAM members to *refrain from fur*thering their ties with Israel. *(see p.5)*

Erbakan call

TURKEY'S Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan used a 45-minute meeting with visiting Israeli *Foreign Minister David* Levy in Ankara this week to demand an immediate halt to the construction of new Jewish settlements in Arab east Jerusalem. Erbakan also called on Israel to comply with *UN* resolutions by withdrawing from occupied Palestinian lands.

Levy's trip, however, marks the first high-level political encounter between Turkey and Israel since Erbakan and his Israeli counterpart, Binyamin Ne*tanyahu, came to power in* their respective countries last year. While it is reported that Erbakan accepted Levy's request for a meeting at the last minute, he has yet to respond to an *invitation to Israel extended* by Netanyahu. *(see p.7)*

Closing in

THE ALLIANCE of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), *led by Laurent Kabila*, is closing in on Zaire's second largest city, Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich southern region. However, French news agency (AFP) reports suggest that the ADFL is meeting with *stiff* resistance from Zairean Pres*ident Mobutu Sese Seku's* elite Presidential Guard and that army reinforcements have been flown in.

Kabila also claimed that the ADFL is advancing fast towards Kinshasa and is now some 200 kilometres from the capital. He also vowed to continue fighting until Mobutu surrenders according to The Associated Press.

In Kinshasa itself, President Mobutu ordered a *state of emergency and* banned political rallies. Soldiers fired tear gas to break up protests by hundreds of supporters of new Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, a long-time opponent *of Mobutu. In a move to in*stitute democracy, Tshisekedi, who was arrested yesterday and later released, proposed to scrap the government and the constitution and offer cabinet seats to Kabila. *(see p.5)*

INSIDE

The olive branch is fallen

As tensions escalate on the West Bank the US administration has little room for manoeuvre, writes **Lamis Andoni** from Washington

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's determination to expand Israeli *settlements in East Jerusalem effectively* leaves the American administration with few options to salvage the Middle East peace process despite President Clinton's announcement on Tuesday that there was "a fairly decent chance" of reviving peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Analysts close to the US administration suggest privately that Washington may seek to weaken Netanyahu, forcing a national unity coalition with the Labour party in an attempt to break the current deadlock.

But Netanyahu, who succeeded in his visit to the US this week to rally the Jew*ish pro-Israeli lobby behind his stand* to assert Israeli control over all of Jerusalem and to shift the focus to "Palestinian terror" as the main obstacle to peace, seems unlikely to respond to any such pressure, leading some Washington insiders to believe that, far from being wary of alienating his more extremist right wing constituency, Netanyahu is actively seeking to *be their representative.*

Earlier in the week both the special coordinator of the peace process Dennis Ross and Vice President Al Gore, a staunch supporter of Israel, sought to placate the pro-Israeli lobby, telling the American-Israeli Political Action Committee that Israeli security remained on top of the American agenda.

Meanwhile, King Hussein of Jordan has been trying to get Yasser Arafat to agree to the resumption of some sort of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination.

"It is true that the King has helped. But so far there is not enough Palestinian-Israeli coordination," an administration *source told the Weekly.*

The two options now being discussed in Washington are whether to build on Netanyahu's proposal to start final status negotiations, or else to directly supervise top level Israeli-Palestinian talks. But both options, sources close to the US administra*tion concede, look so far like non-starters,* with Washington remaining wary that even if the Palestinians accepted Israeli proposals uncontrollable violence will erupt once the final negotiations start and Palestinians feel that Netanyahu's government is trying to impose its own vision.

The only way that the Israeli proposal could be a viable option, in the view of analysts familiar with the administration's thinking, is if Israel was ready to accept a compromise regarding the size and the future of the Palestinian entity.

Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinian Minister *of Higher Education, following a meeting* on Tuesday with Dennis Ross, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* the American administra*tion was still in the process of conducting* consultations with both sides to formulate any American initiative.

Ashrawi, told by the Americans that saving the process is a top priority, warned that "unless the US plays a fair and neutral role as an arbitrator, this will be the end of the peace process".

Ashrawi said that in her meeting with Ross she underlined the importance of holding the two sides accountable for implementing agreements already signed, with the US ensuring this accountability, and expressed Palestinian dismay that so *far the US seemed willing to mediate* agreements but would do nothing to enforce them.

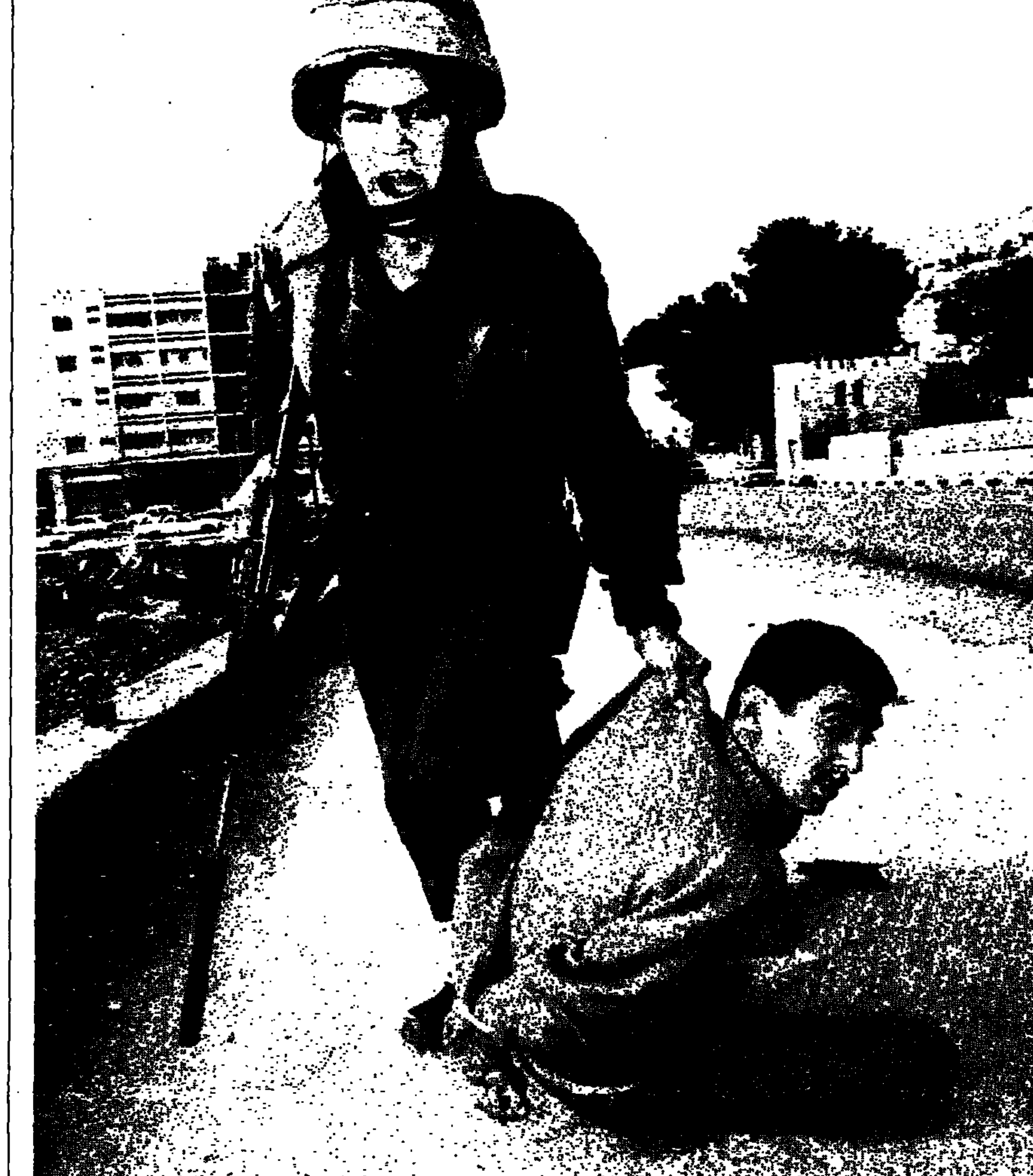
Ashrawi also focused on the humanitarian plight of the Palestinians in an attempt to turn the table on the Israelis, who have been promoting the view that Palestinian "terror" was the main obstacle to peace, adding that she did not foresee a break*through unless Jewish construction in East* Jerusalem stops.

Ashrawi's words were echoed in Cairo today by Ossama El-Baz, chief political advisor to President Mubarak, who told reporters that the US had yet to make concrete suggestions to overcome the crisis facing the peace process given *Israel's* construction of Jewish settlements in Jebel Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. El-Baz added, though, that the US is continuing its efforts at mediation, with meetings today between administration officials and a Palestinian delegation led by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), with Ross's proposed visit to the region next depending *on the outcome of the meeting.*

Stopping the peace process now, El-Baz asserted, will benefit extreme elements within Israel. El-Baz's comments came a day after Palestinians marched behind the flag-shrouded body of a Palestinian killed by Israeli troupes in Hebron.

Clashes erupted after the funeral of Nader Isseid, one of two Palestinians killed in riots that broke out in Hebron on Tuesday after two Jewish seminary students killed a Palestinian. Palestinian officials, meanwhile, said Israel must disarm Jewish settlers before peace talks could resume.

*"The olive branch is fallen and the ka*lashnikov is raised," the marchers chanted at the funeral, a reference to Arafat's famous statement before the UN General Assembly in 1974, in which he told delegates that he came before them carrying a klashnikov in one hand and an olive branch in another. *(see p.4)*



VIOLENCE UNLIMITED: Early in the morning of 9 April 1948, commandos of the Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, and the Stern *Gang attacked Deir Yassin, a village of about 750 Palestinian res*idents. By noon, over 200 villagers, half of them women and children, had been systematically slaughtered. Bullets, grenades and cutlasses were used to "cleanse" the village of its Palestinian inhabitants.

Deir Yassin, like hundreds of other Palestinian towns and villages, no longer exists. It has been literally wiped off the face of the earth. Now part of Jerusalem, "there are no markers, no memorials and no *mention of Deir Yassin by any of the tour guides* at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum, which ironically overlooks the site of the effaced Palestinian village," noted Sahar Ghosheh, the coordinator of a conference held yesterday at Birzeit University in the West Bank city of Ramallah, to launch the Deir Yassin massacre's 50th commemorative year.

The conference is the first in a series of activities planned by the committee and Birzeit University to "keep alive the memories of Deir Yassin and the massacres that followed and preceded it," according to Ghosheh.

For its own part, *Al-Ahram Weekly* will mark the occasion by issuing, next Thursday, a special supplement on Deir Yassin. Contributors include Abdel-Wahab El-Misseiri, Israel Shahak, Gamil *Mattar, Mahgoub Omar, and Palestinian photographer* **Khaled El-Zaghary**, who took the photograph above in November 1995. With minor differences, it could have been taken this week, or as far back as 1948.

New routes to old peaks

Farouk Hosni, abstract painter and pragmatic minister of culture, insists, *in an interview with* **Omayma Abdel-Latif,** that a new cultural vision is needed if Egypt is to keep abreast with the rest of the world





Egypt is the ultimate "heritage state", a trendsetter in the past with the potential to be a trendsetter again, according to Farouk Hosni, who in an exclusive interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* spoke of the need to reinvigorate the cultural life of the nation. What is needed, insists the minister of cul*ture, is nothing less than a new cultural vi*sion, one capable of allowing Egypt to regain its former pre-eminence.

"We have to modernise our cultural vision so that we keep abreast with the world around us," Hosni said, "for when countries talk about their achievements *they do not talk about* factories or roads, rather they take pride in how much of an impact their culture has on the cultures of other nations."

Dressed in a dark suit and sporting a necktie on which a *miniature* version of one of his own paintings had been printed, Hosni raised his voice against the "old guards" in his own ministry, whom he accused of using their influence to block cultural progress and nip in the bud anything that smacked of innovation.

The minister of culture also confirmed that Egypt was pressing ahead with efforts to regain a number of "unique" artifacts, currently in the possession of other countries. Several governments, which the min*ister declined to name*, have already received official requests for the return of antiquities.

"We are not asking for all the antiquities because that would not sound reasonable and besides, some of these artifacts were offered as presents to the kings and presidents *of these countries,*" he said. "What we are asking for are the unique pieces. I strongly believe that, out of courtesy, these pieces should be brought back."

It would be a "historic" achievement if the countries which possess "unique" artifacts such as the Rosetta Stone, currently *in the collection of the British Museum*, and the bust of Nefertiti, now in Munich, agreed to return them, he said.

Asked what he would do if the Egyptian requests were turned down, Hosni said that "other measures", whose nature he did not reveal, would be considered.

Hosni, *describing* Egypt as "the world's largest museum, a museum of civilisation", believes that, despite an unparalleled heritage "we still lack creative ways to convey this heritage to our people and to the rest of the world."

This is why, he explained, the ministry has launched what he describes as "a *new* cultural project," placing the emphasis on three factors: museums, libraries and folkloric troupes.

Preparations are underway for building a *new museum near the Giza Pyramids, he* said, and the announcement of an international competition for landscaping the museum will be made in Italy at the end of this month.

During the course of the interview, the minister of culture ruled out full normalisation of cultural relations with Israel until a comprehensive peace is achieved.

"They ask for full normalisation but we cannot do that unless all occupied territories are restored and a comprehensive and just peace is reached," he said.

Hosni disclosed that the Supreme Council of Antiquities had been approached by an Israeli archaeological mission which offered to restore some Egyptian antiquities, *including two synagogues.* "But then current political circumstances do not allow *any kind of cooperation with Israel,*" he insisted.

Commenting on reports in the British press that Egyptian artifacts were looted from Sarbeit Al-Khadem in the Sinai desert by the late Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan during Israel's occupation of the pe*ninsula after the 1967 War, Hosni said that* investigations were already under way.

"We requested information from the Israeli government on this collection. We have retrieved thousands of items [from Israel] in the past and, if the investigation concludes that the looting did take place we will *request that this collection be sent* back."

Hosni, recently under fire from some members of the Culture and Tourism Committee at the People's Assembly who charge that incidents of antiquities smuggling are on the increase and who have demanded that the work of foreign excavation teams be regulated, responded angrily to such criticisms.

"These teams work hand in hand with Egyptian archaeological missions," he *said. "They represent prominent uni*versities and world famous archaeological institutes." But he added that a special committee had been assigned the task of introducing changes to Antiquities Law no *117 of 1983* which regulates the work of foreign missions.

Hosni denied that incidents of antiquities smuggling were escalating. "The fact is that the opposite is true," he said. "The police have already tightened the noose."

Addressing another issue recently raised *in the press, Hosni also denied that the* Egyptian theatre faced a crisis, but added that a committee had been established to look into the matter. "Those who say that the theatre is in crisis are wrong; rather, it *is those who are complaining* who face the crisis," he said.

"True, there are problems, though they are not to do with the state-run theatre as much as with the writers themselves. There is a crisis in creativity to which I hope dramatists will respond by studying closely new trends in international theatre," he said.





photos: Abdel-Aziz El-Nemr

photo: Abdel-Hakim Ahmed

NDP sweeps lacklustre poll

Even before the official results were announced, the ruling NDP was assured of a landslide victory in municipal elections. **Amira Howeidy** tours the polling stations

"We are the party of the majority, we will win, we always do, whether they like it or not." This was the response of Mrs Esmat Abdel-Meguid (no relation to the Arab League's secretary-general), a candidate of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in Heliopolis, to assertions that voter lists in last Monday's local council elections were inaccurate. Wearing blue jeans and a black leather jacket, Abdel-Meguid smiled to her supporters, security men and employees of the local administration ministry as she arrived at a school used as a polling station.

At 12 noon, four hours after the balloting began, the turnout of voters was meagre. "We expect people will come after 2.30pm when they finish their work," said Hassan Eleiwa, a supporter of Abdel-Meguid. According to Local Administration Minister Mahmoud Sherif, the number of eligible voters nationwide is around 11 million.

Originally, nearly 57,000 candidates were to compete for 47,382 seats on local or municipal councils in villages, city districts, cities and governorates. But Sherif said that 22,912 candidates — all NDP members — won unopposed, leaving 33,427 candidates to fight over the remaining seats.

All 1,012 seats in the governorate of Ismailia went to the NDP after the withdrawal of 86 candidates, both independents and members of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party.

Polling was quiet, unlike the 1995 parliamentary elections which were marred by violence. Mahmoud Qandeel, head of the Field Research Unit in the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR), attributed the lack of violence on Monday to the fact that the participation of opposition parties in the election was marginal. A second factor, he said, is that parliament, as the basic legislative body, is more important to most people than the local councils.

The EOHR, which set up an election watch committee, estimated the turnout of voters as ranging between 5 and 20 per cent. Voters had to choose between 14 and 24 candidates for each of the 1,507 local councils in Egypt's 26 governorates. The individual candidacy system was used in the elections after the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that a combination of the individual and slate systems, previously in force, was unconstitutional.

A young woman who cast her ballot at El-Zeitoun in northern Cairo chose the NDP list because she was asked by her landlord to vote for his brother and the list he was running on. "His brother was there and asked me to mark the names from one to 10. Of course, I didn't know who they were, but what do I stand to lose?" she asked.

Many members of the NDP who were not officially nominated by the party had to run as independents and were expected to rejoin the NDP fold if they won.

Opposition parties which fielded approximately 8,000 candidates accused the NDP and security forces of harassing their nominees. According to Abdel-Hamid Barakat, election coordinator of the Labour Party, five Labour candidates were arrested on the eve of the elections. "Others were detained on election day and their representatives barred from doing their work," he said. Each candidate has the right to post representatives at the polling stations of his constituency to keep an eye on the balloting process.

Barakat said that most of the violence targeting Labour's candidates was in Alexandria. "We have reports that the voting was rigged and that, in one constituency, the ballot boxes were filled and closed by 8.30am," half an hour after voting started, he said. Labour fielded 3,000 candidates in the election battle.

Mohamed Said, election coordinator of the leftist Tagammu Party, also complained of harassment. "Many of our candidates were pressured to withdraw to make way for the NDP and two actually agreed," he said. Tagammu's 740 candidates "did not have too much hope," he added.

In the industrial suburb of Helwan, south of Cairo, a heated election battle was anticipated and security precautions seemed tighter than in other places. But the alarm proved to be false. "We all expected some sort of violence or massive arrests, but everything was quiet," said Ahmed Saadeddin, a 31-year-old teacher of Arabic. "Many Islamists were detained, so there was no violence," he volunteered to explain.

The Wafd Party boycotted the elections, announcing in advance that they would be rigged. The outlawed Muslim Brotherhood did not contest the elections as a group but a few hundred of its members ran individually. Some of them were arrested.

"The results of the elections were known long before election day," said Hussein Abdel-Razek, a leading member of Tagammu. "It is the NDP competing with no one or competing with itself."

'Not an easy decision'

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak said on Monday that freezing or breaking off relations with Israel would not be "an easy decision to take", reports **Nevine Khalil**.

Mubarak, responding to a question by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, said, "If we cut off our diplomatic relations or do anything like that, that means we will not be able to contact the other side to help solve the existing problem." He added that "we have to look to our interests, the interests and stability of the area [first]".

Speaking to reporters after casting his vote in the municipal elections and before a meeting between US President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Washington, Mubarak expressed hope that the two leaders "conclude something concerning the present problem of building in Jeruslaem."

He said that it would be "a very good step forward" if Clinton persuaded Netanyahu to agree to the US initiative, which reportedly calls for a halt in settlement building for the next six months while negotiations continue. "It would help us to push the peace process forward," Mubarak said. "Let them hold [up] the settlements for the time being and in the negotiations all the problems can be solved."

Mubarak affirmed that Jerusalem "is a very sensitive issue [but] could be resolved whenever the agreement is implemented and the people are relaxed." He added that Palestinian and Israeli negotiators could find a forumla "convenient for both sides".

The following day, Tuesday, Mubarak told reporters that he preferred not to "rush into convening an Arab summit" until the need arose, adding that he was confident that "Arab leaders would not hesitate to attend a summit whenever necessary."

Prosecution denies 'timed' arrests

Brotherhood officials believe that recent arrests of group members were timed to ensure their exclusion from the local elections scene. **Amira Howeidy** reports

Only days before the local council elections were held, security forces arrested a large number of people believed to be members or sympathisers of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. According to security sources, the arrests last Friday involved 27 of the outlawed Brotherhood, but Brotherhood officials claim that "hundreds" have been rounded up.

Five journalists and a lawyer were among those arrested. The journalists include two reporters for *Al-Shaab*, mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party.

State security prosecutors ordered the 27 individuals remanded in custody for 15 days on charges of "belonging to an illegal organisation that aims to overthrow the government."

Prosecutor Hani Borham said the 27 are also accused of possessing "literature inciting hatred of the regime." The 27 were allegedly arrested while conducting an "organisational" meeting at a private home.

Borham said police were searching for two other Brotherhood members, whose names he did not disclose, "because they are involved in the same case."

Moukhtar Nouh, an Islamist lawyer, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the two were Sana'a Abdallah, a member of the Doctors' Syndicate, and Mohamed Yehia.

Maamoun El-Hodeibi, the Brotherhood's deputy supreme guide, said that "hundreds" were rounded up in the Nile Delta governorates of El-Sharqiya and El-Daqahliya as well as the southern province of El-Minya.

El-Hodeibi said the arrests were made on the eve of the local council elections to "terrorise" the candidates and force them to withdraw from the race. "This is the scenario that usually precedes any elections in Egypt," El-Hodeibi said, adding that another group was arrested five months ago in Helwan, south of Cairo, including candidates and their supporters.

Borham rejected El-Hodeibi's claim. "The state security prosecution has nothing to do with the timing of the arrests," he said. "We have evidence against those people. Were we supposed to wait for a better, less significant time?"

Nouh's estimate of the number of those arrested fell somewhere between those given by Borham and El-Hodeibi. "We have definite information that around 53 people in El-Minya and 60 in El-Sharqiya and El-Daqahliya were detained," he told the *Weekly*. "But since the elections are over, the danger is over."

Magdi Hussein, editor-in-chief of *Al-Shaab*, described the arrests as a "pre-emptive" attempt on the government's part. Hussein named the *Al-Shaab* reporters arrested as Khaled Younis and Alaa Bahr. "The two cover the activities of the Ministry of Housing and the professional syndicates. Their stories have never been controversial," Hussein said.

Hussein argued that arresting people for belonging to the Brotherhood, "even if it is illegal, is not justified so long as they are not involved in illegal activities." He conceded that the two arrested journalists are known to be affiliated with the outlawed group.

Copenhagen denounced

Writers, journalists, academics and artists gathered in the Press Syndicate to slam 'cultural normalisation' with Israel. **Nevine Khalil** attended

At a rally organised by the Press Syndicate Monday night, hundreds of writers and thinkers denounced any form of normalisation with Israel, especially by intellectuals. Over a dozen speakers addressed a gathering of around 300 people for nearly three hours, at the end of which an anti-normalisation statement was issued.

The three-page statement said that participants "vehemently denounce those who hold dialogue with the usurping enemy" and urge all cultural and political institutions and unions to which they are affiliated to "take the proper democratic action against their deviation". The statement also said that participants will seek to defeat all such normalisation attempts and expose their perpetrators.

Participants vowed to "expose Israel's expansionist schemes", "protect our nation's sacred ideals as well as fight Zionism". The statement described Israel as a threat to Arab identity, security and development.

Participants found it "illogical that some Egyptians and Arabs rush into normalisation with Israel... making friends and holding meetings with the symbols of the Zionist state." The statement said the International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace (IAAIP), better known as the Copenhagen Alliance, is an Israeli scheme to "impose normalisation through intellectuals — the first defence line — because Israel realised that official agreements are not sufficient [for normal relations]."

The speakers included Abdel-Azim Anis, a professor of mathematics and the author of a number of works on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hassan Hanafi, a professor of philosophy, novelist and critic Radwa Ashour and Abdel-Sattar Ishra, secretary-general of the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce.

Saadeddin Wahba, head of the Arab Artists' Union, described as "a new trick" the reported American proposal to halt Jewish settlement building for six months while peace negotiations take place. Wahba also said that Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's proposal for Camp David-style negotiations "will be a failure just as much as the original [Egyptian-Israeli] Camp David [summit] was." Wahba also denounced the role played by the US, which he described as both the "director and lead actor" of the peace process.

Veteran journalist Mohamed Ouda agreed, denouncing the US for "guaranteeing Israel's qualitative superiority over all 22 Arab states". He suggested that Egyptians should boycott US products for one week in a display of rejection of America's double-standard policies in the Middle East.

Ouda said that those "who seek knowledge of the other side" by holding a dialogue with Israelis should start at home by reading up on history and finding out more about the Arab-Israeli conflict. "Copenhagen is like beating a dead horse," Ouda said, "and is a failed attempt which will never gain any support." He criticised what he described as "clandestine meetings" in preparation for Copenhagen, adding that the process would have been more credible if it was "transparent to all of us".

Writer Salaheddin Hafez said that intellectuals who oppose the IAAIP "do not fear dialogue with the Israelis, but insist that such a dialogue should be held on the basis of specific principles and understandings". Hafez said that Israel's upholding of "pre-emptive peace" is a direct threat to Egypt, because issues pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict such as Jerusalem, nuclear armament and arms superiority are at the core of Egypt's interests. He noted that bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel are witnessing unprecedented problems since the two countries signed a peace treaty nearly two decades ago.

He asserted that Egyptian public opinion has reached new heights in denouncing Israeli policies, and that this resistance should be encouraged. "We must entrench anti-normalisation sentiments at the grass-root level," Hafez said.

Abdel-Wahab El-Misseiri, a professor of literature and the author of an encyclopaedia on Zionism, drew a distinction between Zionism, "which is at the core of the Israeli state," and Judaism as a religion. He noted that in the beginning Zionist pioneers attempted to literally buy out Palestine at a cost of 2 million sterling pounds. Bahaaeddin Ghazi, chairman of the Federation of Cairo University Professors, said that the Zionist movement is not only a threat to nationalist movements in the region, but to some governments as well.

Osama Anwar Okasha, a popular script writer of television soap operas, called on Arab governments "to stop signing more agreements" with Israel. "We have signed enough already, and the coming generations should sign no more," Okasha said. He emphasised that all intellectual institutions should "severely punish" those who go against decisions to boycott Israel.

Abaza's 17-year long reign ends

Playwright Saadeddin Wahba is the new chairman of the Writers' Union following a walkout by Tharwat Abaza. **Rania Khallaf** reports

Novelist Tharwat Abaza, chairman of the Writers' Union for the past 17 years, took union members by surprise on Sunday when he announced his resignation — despite winning the highest number of votes in elections for the Union's board.

At the first meeting of the new board, held on the same day, playwright Saadeddin Wahba, the Union's vice-chairman, was elected unopposed to the chairman's post.

Farouk Khorshid was elected vice-chairman, Ahmed Sweilam secretary-general, and Medhat El-Gayyar treasurer.

Abaza, who had come under fire from colleagues for allowing people who were not professional writers to join the Union, did not attend the board's meeting, but sent a letter of resignation. In a telephone interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Abaza refused to divulge the reasons for his resignation, but made it clear that he was quitting not only the Union's board but the Union as well.

"I do not care about the Union any more, I have other things to worry about," said Abaza, who won 194 votes in last Friday's elections for 15 out of the board's 30 seats. The other 15 seats remained in the same hands.

Novelist Gamal El-Ghitani, who won 141 votes, said Abaza's resignation had been expected "because he felt that the new board did not favour him as chairman."

Some board members suggested that Abaza be declared honourary chairman for the rest of his life, but this was opposed by El-Ghitani, who said the Union "should start a new phase."

Wahba said he was confident of success, regardless of whether Abaza had resigned or not. "Writers have displayed a wish for change since 1995," he said. "The latest elections made it clear that changing the Union's leadership was imperative."

El-Ghitani said the new board was "more balanced, providing an accurate reflection of cultural life."

Like El-Ghitani, Wahba agreed that the Union should start "a new phase." Although the Union had made remarkable social achievements, its cultural role remained weak, Wahba said. "The new board will use its maximum capabilities to play an active role in cultural life and restore the Arab dimension to the Union," he added.

About 400 voters, out of nearly 600 eligible to vote, cast ballots in Friday's elections. Sixty-nine candidates competed for the 15 seats. Some Union members were denied the right to vote because they had not paid the annual membership fee.

Novelist Ibrahim Asslan, who lost his seat on the Union's board, said the low turnout of voters was due to the fact that "writers have lost confidence in the Union because of its weak leadership." Abaza's resignation, Asslan said, is "proof that he was not pleased with the new board, which includes liberal figures. But this is reason to hope that the Union will start a new phase under the promising leadership of the new board."

But old board members, such as Abdel-Tawwab Youssef, argue that the Union has done its best to serve writers. The services may not be adequate, Youssef said, but this is due to the meagre financial support the Union gets from the government. New board members who have great expectations will be surprised to find out how limited the Union's capabilities are and should seek new sources of financing, he said.

Only one woman, out of five female candidates, made it to the Union's board. Hoda El-Egemi, a radio broadcaster, won 185 votes, although she has never written a single book.

Ganzouri on Asia tour

PRIME Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri will begin on Sunday a 10-day tour in the Far East which will take him to Malaysia, Singapore and China. El-Ganzouri will sign four agreements on the protection of investments and the prevention of dual taxation in an attempt to correct the imbalance of trade between Egypt and the three countries.

In China, the prime minister will also discuss the possibility of creating an Egyptian-Chinese industrial free zone in the Gulf of Suez and the establishment of an Egyptian-Chinese public contracting company to operate in the Middle East and Africa. El-Ganzouri will also discuss the creation of an Egyptian-Chinese bank and a joint Egyptian-Chinese development council.

Ironfist minister dies

ZAKI Badr, a former, and highly controversial, interior minister, passed away last Thursday at the age of 71 following liver surgery in the United States. Badr, who served as minister of interior between 1986-1990, was removed from office after a reporter taped a public address in which Badr used indecent language to describe fellow ministers.

Badr came to office with an iron fist, succeeding Ahmed Rushdi who lost his post following the 1986 mutiny of the Central Security Forces. Badr believed that terrorism was the biggest threat to Egypt's stability and implemented a policy of counter-violence in dealing with suspected terrorists in Upper Egypt.

After leaving the cabinet, Badr served as an appointed member of the Shura Council until 1995. Once out of office, 'the minister with a chip on his shoulder' dragged out a personal vendetta with his successor, Abdel-Halim Moussa, accusing the latter of financial irregularities and arms trafficking.

A violent temper and gruff language ensured that Badr made many enemies, including journalists whom he accused of taking bribes from Moussa, opposition party leaders who claimed he illegally bugged their telephones and fellow ministers whom he smeared in public.

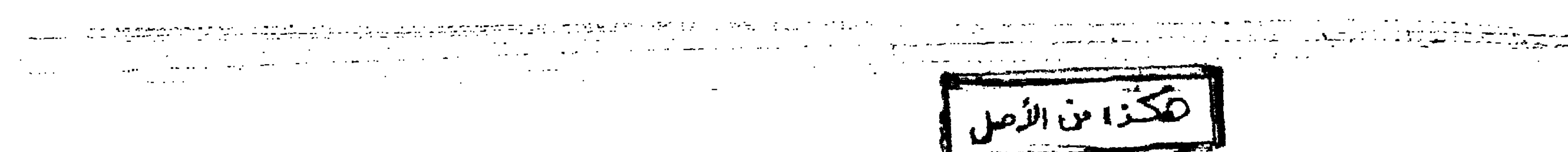
Badr always boasted that he was only calling a spade a spade, and that he would rather have "one honourable friend than be surrounded by thousands of hypocrites". Badr's body was sent back to Cairo on Saturday and his funeral, attended by a number of dignitaries, including a presidential representative, took place the next day in Nasr City. Also attending were Shura Council Speaker Mustafa Kamal Helmi, Minister of Interior Hassan El-Alfi and Zakaria Azmi, the president's chief of staff.

Peaceful reactor underway

EGYPT'S first 22-megawatt nuclear reactor will go into action at the end of 1997, at a total cost of LE450 million. The reactor, to be used for peaceful purposes, was built in Argentina and will be based in Inshass, northeast of Cairo. Egypt imported two mini-reactors, two megawatts each, in the 1960s.

A spokesman for the Egyptian Atomic Energy Authority said on Sunday that construction of the reactor is already under way, at a cost of LE350 million and that an additional LE100 million was spent to purchase a cyclostron to produce radioactive isotopes.

Minister of Electricity and Energy Maher Abaza said that the reactor would be used for "peaceful research in the fields of agriculture, industry and medicine". Egypt is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and another treaty banning nuclear tests.



هكذا من الأصل

Ganzouri outlines 20-year vision

AS EGYPT and the world stand at the threshhold of the 21st century, the cabinet has prepared a landmark document outlining ambitious socio-economic development plans for the next 20 years to ensure a better life for all Egyptians by the year 2017. Four plans, each covering five years, are primarily based on breaking loose from the Nile Valley and establishing *new agricultural and industrial* communities in the Western Desert and the Sinai Peninsula.

The targets of these plans include: increasing the inhabited area from the present *four per cent of Egypt's total area* to 25 per cent, accelerating the rate of annual economic growth from 4.8 per cent to 7.6 per cent, raising the gross national product from *LE257 billion to 1,100 billion* and raising the per capita share of the gross national product from LE4,270 to 13,750 — all by the year 2017. About 550,000 new job opportunities will be created every year, the annual inflation rate will be kept down at five per cent and the present deficit in the trade balance will be turned into a surplus.

Achieving these targets will require *LE100 billion in annual* investments over the next 20 years, the document states, apportioning private enterprise the responsibility of executing between 75 and 80 per cent of all development projects.

Agricultural strategy will aim at protecting cultivated land from urban encroachment and achieving an agricultural production growth rate of four per cent annually. This strategy also targets a *more efficient* utilisation of water resources, including Nile and subterranean water as well as recycling agricultural drainage water.

The document estimates the annual *volume of available water resources at 63.9* billion cubic metres, and recommends an increase of 10.7 billion cubic metres to be used in reclaiming 1.5 million feddans in the Nile Valley as well as the New Valley in the Western Desert. Moreover, the document states that the overall target of the *four five-year plans should* be the reclamation of 3.4 million feddans out of a total of *eight million feddans that* are *potentially* cultivable.

The annual rate of industrial growth will be upped from nine per cent to 11 per cent, by encouraging industrial *investments*, small and *medium enterprises and export*-oriented industries and also by improving product quality.

Electric power will be boosted from the present 90 billion kilowatt/hour to 257 *billion by the year 2017*. New roads, *1,338* kilometres long, will be constructed and others will be expanded or widened *and* new bridges, linking the two banks of the Nile, will be built in Assiut, Zefta, Aswan, Sherbin, Gerga, Kafr El-Zayyat, Akhmim, Malawi, Naga Hammadi, Ashmoun and Kom Ombo. A bridge will also be built over the Suez Canal. Railways, 6,000 kilometres *long, will be renovated*.

The tourism industry targets 27 million tourists, spending 237 million nights annually, by the year 2017. The objectives of the housing strategy are the construction of *5.3 million* housing units as well as 44 new cities and communities.

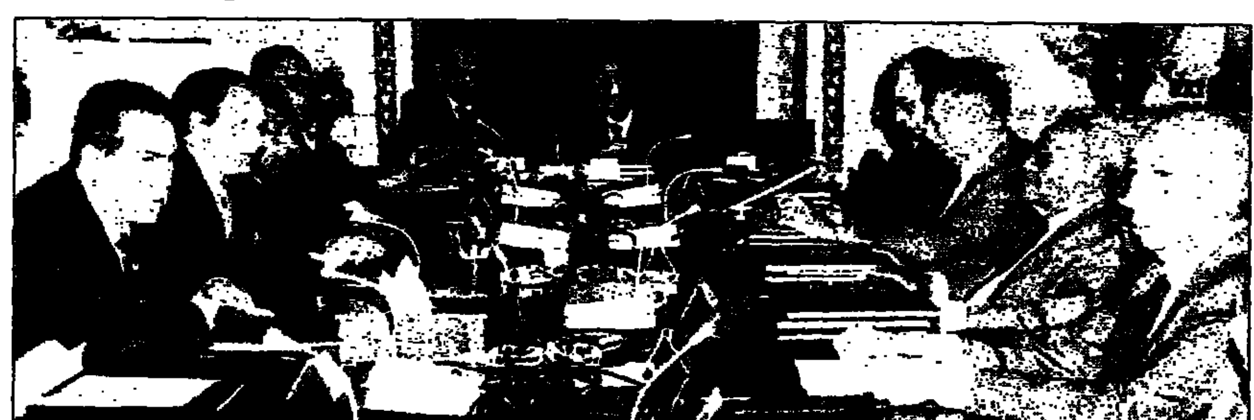
"Breaking loose from the [Nile] Valley is an unavoidable necessity," the document states. "How can we go on living on a mere 4 per cent of Egypt's total area, on 7.8 million feddans of agricultural land? The *old valley is crammed with inhabitants* and the agricultural land has been exhausted. Breaking loose from the old valley is the solution..." This will not only ensure increased production, but will also result in a greater variety of agricultural products and methods as well as the *establishment of new industries*, the document states.

"There are two directions for the Egyptian sprint for building up a new civilisation: the Sinai, which will soon be irrigated by water from the El-Salam Canal, and southern Egypt, where the water of the Nile *will be carried to the heart of the* Western Desert for the establishment of a New Delta," the document states.

photos: Nour Sobeih & Mohamed El-Ofy



El-Ganzouri's meeting with chief editors and writers...



...experts...



...and opposition party leaders

Will the dream come true?

Ambitious development plans for the 21st century outlined in a government document drew mixed reactions from opposition leaders, some dismissing it as just a dream. But Prime Minister El-Ganzouri insists the dream will come true. Shaden Shehab reviews the conflicting views

A government document outlining ambitious plans for Egypt's future was defended by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri at meetings with political party *leaders, intellectuals and journalists this* week.

The prime minister insisted that the 200-page report, which details plans to increase the inhabited area of the country by more than 400 per cent, was based on scientific studies and could become a reality.

According to Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, the meetings signalled the *government's wish to open* a dialogue on national problems with the various segments of society and mobilise public opinion behind "the great national projects."

El-Ganzouri said the document took society's abilities into account and was designed to deal with the future socio-*economic challenges. He said achieving* the great hope of expanding the populated area of Egypt from four to 25 per cent "did not come from a vacuum but was based on scientific studies conducted by Egyptian experts."

Referring to the government's plan to break loose from the Nile Valley and es*tablish new communities in the southern* part of the Western Desert and on the Sinai peninsula, El-Ganzouri said that two committees will be formed to supervise the two projects.

Financing these ambitious projects — which would require LE75 billion from the private sector and LE25 billion from the government annually — will be a major challenge, *El-Ganzouri admitted*.

But, he said, the money over the next 20 years was expected to come from:

— an increase of petroleum and natural gas revenue, with 46 new discoveries made in 1996-97.

— the export of surplus electric power *by means of an electric grid running from* Egypt eastward to Iran, and west to Spain.

— using alternative sources of energy which will raise the annual volume of power to 270 billion kilowatt-hour by the year 2017, of which 40 billion kilowatt-hour could be exported.

— money from iron ore discovered south *of Aswan, with production expected to average* 305 million tons annually.

Responding to critics who claimed that the volume of water needed to irrigate the southern section of the Western Desert would not be available, El-Ganzouri said that water would be pumped from Lake Nasser, behind the Aswan High Dam, "which will ensure the continuity of ir*rigating agricultural land*."

The document, El-Ganzouri said, "outlines a general framework for Egypt's ambitions as well as a future vision for building a new civilisation by breaking loose from the old [Nile] valley to a new valley, that covers 25 per cent of Egypt's total area."

But opposition party leaders described the ambitious plan as a dream that requires additional study, although they expressed hope the dream could come true. The leaders agreed with El-Ganzouri that each party should prepare a document of its own to be submitted to him for evaluation.

Yassin Serageddin, spokesman of the Wafd Party, said the Wafd "welcomes any project that is to Egypt's benefit. But it is all based on dreams. We hope that it will come true some day. But this requires more realistic and thorough studies."

He suggested that horizontal expansion of agriculture could be achieved by cultivating an additional one million feddans *of land, stretching between Aswan and* Beni-Sweif, which party experts believe could be cultivated. Moreover, he said, there are two million feddans of cultivable land in the Sinai desert. "This will cost one tenth of what will be spent on the government project. There are easier and more *realistic alternatives," Serageddin said*.

Rifaat El-Said, secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, said that "we did not see the document before meeting with the prime minister. It is 200 pages long, so it will take time to make a final assessment."

El-Said added: "It can be a dream, but why not? Let us dream."

*Diaeddin Dawoud, leader of the Dem*ocratic Nasserist Party, said, "We cannot deny the government's right to come forward with hopes and dreams for the future. But such projects need a lot of in-depth studies to make them come true."

Mustafa Kamel Murad, leader of the Liberal Party, did not attend the meeting with the prime minister because he be*lieves "the whole project is nonsense*. Such a project should be discussed in parliament or the Shura Council. I did not attend because I like to be realistic. We are discussing what we want to do in the 21st century. Why don't we decide what we will do year by year instead?"

Murad added: "In politics, you have to be realistic rather than dreamy. When they say that in 20 years the inhabited area will increase from four per cent to 25 per cent [of Egypt's total area], they cannot be realistic. It sounds good but it is impossible to achieve. Moreover, the project requires LE100 billion annually. Where will this money come from? *The figures are totally* illogical."

Ibrahim Shukri, leader of the Islamist-oriented Labour Pparty, was more optimistic. "Every new project that affects the future of a nation starts with an idea that might seem out of reach, but experience shows that many of our dreams did come true."

Shukri said the government has confidence in its ability because, in a relatively short period, it has improved the national infrastructure, including the sewage system, electricity and telephones.

"What is in the document can be achieved provided that we add to our discoveries *[of oil and iron ore]... New dis*coveries lead to new horizons. We can do it, if we focus on the available resources and use them in the best way."

A graveyard for chemical waste

Although environment protection is the declared objective, the chosen site of a chemical waste graveyard in the Western Desert has aroused concern *among ecologists*. Mona El-Nahhas investigates



The graveyard site in the Western Desert

Environmentalists have expressed apprehensions over plans by a public sector company to bury nearly *20,000 tons of chemical waste* in the Western Desert. What triggered their worries is the location of the "landfill", which is close to land reclamation projects in Al-Nubariya and about *300* metres to the north of a new highway that is *under construction to* link the Natroun Valley with El-Alamein.

Work on digging the landfill began in October, with the approval of the Environment Affairs Agency, the Ministry of Defence and the governorate of Alexandria. Of*ficials, denying press reports* that the scheme endangered the environment, insisted that it would eliminate a pollution hazard.

Workers for a German company in charge of implementing the project have already finished digging. Now, they are *busy covering the* inside of the landfill with layers of sulphur as a precaution against possible leakage of toxic mercury. According to Adel Marie, the project manager, the possibility is very remote but, in such an eventuality, *sulphur will interact with mercury*, producing mercury sulphate — a compound that has no adverse effect on the environment.

Marie said the landfill, 120 metres long and five metres deep, was designed according to the most advanced criteria. "*All safety factors* were taken into consideration to prevent any leakage of toxic material into the air or subterranean water," he said. The project is financed by a German grant of 20 million marks.

But *Mahmoud Nasrallah of the* National Research Centre came out *against the burial of chemical* waste in an area that could be developed in the future. "Instead of talking about safety factors, it would be better to search for another location," he said.

Mohamed El-Zarqa, a senior of*ficial at the Environmental Affairs* Agency, expressed anger at the severe campaign launched by the Arabic-language press against the project. "How can they attack a project that is aimed at protecting the environment?" he asked.

According to Salah Hafez, the Agency's head, an environment-protection law passed in 1994 obligated chemical companies to use new technologies to eliminate, or cut down, pollutant hazards. Accordingly, the Alexandria-based *Misr Company for Chemical Industries* decided to stop using mer*cury cells in the production of* chlorine because they have adverse effects on the environment. The company also decided to destroy an old factory in which the mercury was used. The construction of the landfill became necessary, *therefore, in order to bury the* chemical waste, he said.

Hafez insisted that the location of the landfill was chosen carefully after the necessary geological and hydraulic studies were conducted over two years. "The studies showed *that the landfill will not* threaten the subterranean water, which lies at a depth of 60 metres," he said.

According to Hafez, the waste was transported safely from the old factory, which is located about 90 *kms from the landfill*. The waste was placed inside 10,000 concrete blocks, each *containing two tons*, he said.

Hafez described the project as a "pioneer Third World experiment to get rid of dangerous wastes." Under international conventions, he said, all countries are obligated *to get rid of dangerous wastes* inside their own territories, and not export them to other countries. "This means that all dangerous wastes of this country will have to be treated and buried inside Egyptian soil," he said.

According *to a report submitted* to the cabinet by Atef Ebeid, minister of the public business sector and minister of state for administrative development and the environment, an engineer with the Northern Coast Development Authority *filed a complaint on* 17 March with the public prosecutor *for Western Alexandria. The prosecutor* asked the Environment Affairs Agency to send a technical committee to the site to investigate the complaint.

This committee visited the factories of the Misr Company for *Chemical Industries in* Alexandria, including the rubble of the old factory, on 31 March. The committee also scrutinised the studies made by the German company, including the geology and nature of the location and the level of the sub*terranean water. It checked the de*sign of the landfill and ascertained that it was being covered with layers of asphalt and sulphur. The committee also made sure that the design of the landfill was correct and its location appropriate. But it *recommended that the Misr Company pledge not to bury additional wastes into this graveyard and also* recommended that the Environment Affairs Agency supervise the construction of the graveyard to ascertain that it is in line with the necessary specifications.

The landfill is located about 300 *metres to the north of a highway* connecting the Natroun Valley with El-Alamein, that is still under construction. Work on the 133-km-long road began two years ago and will be completed in 1998 at a cost of LE105 million.

Dr Osama Okeil, consultant of the highway project and professor of road construction at Ain Shams University, recommend that the graveyard be moved to another location because it could adversely affect developmental plans for the *area around the new road.*

Book rights dialogue

The American publishing industry is making an effort to convince its Egyptian counterpart to adhere to copyright laws. Dina Ezzat reports

A group of *American* book *publishers*, sellers, agents and authors spent four days in Cairo discussing the promotion and enforcement of copyright laws with their Egyptian counterparts in an attempt to ensure that the publishing community reaps the full rewards of its creative work.

The five-member group represented *Corridors of Culture*, a cooperative venture between the United States In*formation* Service and America's private book industry, which is designed to support and encourage the efforts of writers to live and work in free societies.

The organisation's members undertake overseas visits to share insights and practical information about writing and publishing with other countries.

"We believe we [the writer-publisher community] have to talk to one another across the world about this issue of copyrights," said Al Young, a writer and member of the group.

The visitors met with leading members of the Egyptian publishing industry, including representatives of the Union of Egyptian Publishers, the General Egyptian Book Organisation and Al-Ahram Publishing House.

Copyright is not just about securing all due revenues for the writers and publishers, argued American *author Lawrence* Wright. "Without fundamental copyrights, you cannot be sure of protecting the content of what you wrote," he said.

The informal US-Egyptian discussions, *the participants* said, *did not digress* to debating the official bilateral terms of protecting copyrights of American authors and books in Egypt or vice-versa.

"We have not negotiated anything regarding the protection of American copyrights in Egypt or anything of the sort. We have no official capacity," said Wendy Weil, a literary agent and vice-president of Corridors of Culture. "We just demonstrated what happens in the US *regarding the preservation of copy*rights and we hope that Egypt could find something in there to benefit from," she added.

Under the US system an author is en*titled to copyright throughout his life*time. After the author's death, his heirs are entitled to 50 years' copyright. But a bill has been submitted to Congress extending the heirs' eligibility to copyright to 70 years to make the practice consistent with copyright laws in the European Union.

According to Mohamed Lutfi, a professor of law at Cairo University, there is much in the American system that is lacking in Egypt.

Egypt has always protected the copyrights of authors and is an old signatory of international conventions and agreements covering the copyrights of na*tional and foreign writers alike, he said.*

However, Lutfi conceded that piracy remains a problem. The creative work of many Egyptian writers is reprinted in other Middle Eastern capitals and sold at much cheaper prices.

Offering their experience in this respect, the Corridors of Culture delegation provided handouts on how to maximise the benefit of the existing laws through the recruitment of experienced agents and lawyers who can guarantee the author a carefully composed contract and who *have contacts with overseas* counterparts to detect and take the necessary legal action against any possible piracy.

The American visitors later left for Israel to hold meetings with the Israeli writer-publisher community and take part in a Jerusalem book fair.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

The process against peace

The Camp David scenario is hard to envisage, writes **Eqbal Ahmad**, for in the Zionist ambition, Palestine is not Egypt, the West Bank is not Sinai, nor is Jerusalem like Taba

From the start, Oslo I and II represented the triumph of power over justice, appearance over reality and symbols over substance. As such, they were written in delible ink. Why cry foul. Give Binyamin Netanyahu the credit he deserves. He alone among the main players has exposed the "peace process" for what it is: a shadow play of American and Israeli knights and a make-believe bunch of Arab knaves. Under the scorching sun of radical Zionism the script has faded faster than expected, and the play has come to an abrupt halt. There is hand wringing in Washington and talk of resuscitating what officials and the media pundits call, without even a hint of irony, the "peace process". But how?

Israel's prime minister has supplied one idea, and his friends in Washington are busy kosherising it so the Arabs may be able to swallow it after some persuasion. It envisages what the *New York Times* has described as "radical surgery": abandon Oslo I and II, and go for a quick final settlement. This is obviously a bold move that, if undertaken seriously, will force Israel to confront the fundamental issues which the Oslo agreements had bypassed, viz: the future of Zionist settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, control of the land and its resources including water, status of East Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees to return and resettlement and, above all, restoration of Arab sovereignty over Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Israel has been reluctant to negotiate on these issues. Oslo was designed to accommodate this reluctance and to engage meanwhile in 'confidence building measures'.

Understandably, Yasser Arafat dismissed as a "gimmick" Binyamin Netanyahu's proposal last month. Now the US contemplates putting some flesh on it in an attempt to forge another deal. Mr Arafat, who appears enamored of American arbitration, is likely to take the gimmick as serious diplomacy. In Washington, thought is being given to packaging it to his taste. He likes, they say, the trappings of power and symbols of sovereignty and is realistic enough to know that the agreements he has signed have trapped him into a posture of permanent, if contentious, collaboration with Israel. So it is a question of providing incentives to 'rebuild some mutual confidence', as the *New York Times* urged editorially on 2 April between Netanyahu and Arafat. Since American initiatives are designed to suit Israeli preferences one might ask: what incentives shall Israel allow?

"Airports and seaports" cues in the *New York Times*. The formula is deceptively simple: make the "benefits of self rule more tangible to ordinary Palestinians." These include "the allowing of a Palestinian airport and seaport in Gaza, and establishing transportation corridors to let Palestinians travel freely between Gaza and the West Bank." Israel will control the air space over Gaza, and on ground its security forces will conduct full scrutiny of travellers and their belongings, as discreetly as they do now at border crossings. As quid pro quo, Arafat shall be required to make "concerted efforts to quell terrorism". Translated from Oslowian this means that in return for the privilege of flying planes from Gaza, Arafat will be required to suppress more enthusiastically than he now does those Arabs who would protest Israel's land expropriations and colonisation. When I queried an acquaintance familiar with Washington's peace making strategy, he said merely that "Arafat is indeed desperate to gain the freedom to fly in and out of Gaza." Can one hope that Israeli and American officials have exaggerated the pettiness of Arafat's ambition?

American policy makers — who, without exception, are partisans of Israel — know that to ensure Palestinian acquiescence and Arab equanimity they must hold out a larger promise beyond airports and seaports. A diplomatic initiative is required. Hence there is talk of moving towards a Camp David type meeting whereby Bill Clinton would play Jimmy Carter, Binyamin Netanyahu will be Menachem Begin, and Arafat will serve as Anwar Sadat's understudy. To render this a tangible option, Washington is quietly encouraging the formation of a Likud-Labour coalition government that will include Shimon Peres, whom Arafat reportedly trusts, as foreign minister. Netanyahu is said to be malleable.

This scenario is hard to envisage. In Zionist ambition, Palestine is not Egypt, the West Bank is not Sinai, nor is Jerusalem like Sharm El-Sheikh. There is little give here and hardly any room for bargaining. This applies as much to Labour as to Likud. The American media and official line notwithstanding, the Middle East policies of Labour and Likud differ in style and tactics and only marginally in substance and strategic objectives. Both regard Jerusalem as Israel's "eternal capital". Both consider pioneering in the West Bank and Gaza a "Jewish right". Both share the ideal of a sectarian Jewish state in which non-Jews are denied equal rights. Both are committed to rejecting a Palestinian state except a symbolic one in Gaza. Both are equally committed to their strategic alliance with the USA. Both hold Arabs in contempt. And both envisage Israel as the Middle Eastern hegemon.

It is unlikely then that a Labour-Likud government will be more amenable to serious peace making than either of the two Israeli parties have been in the past. All that talk about Israel's insecurities obscures three fundamental realities which shape Israel's military and diplomatic policy. One is that since 1968 Israel has been a status quo power. It holds all the lands and cities which the Zionist movement has coveted. It will not give these up without considerable pressure be it military, economic, political or all three. Two, Israel is politically, economically, and psychologically more vulnerable now than it was between 1949-1967. Although its power is enormous it is largely derivative, its mainstays being Arab frailty and American support. Three, a fundamental source of American support for Israel is the presumption of Arab weakness.

It follows that to negotiate in earnest and with a sense that they are dealing with equals, Israel's leaders must be convinced that their intransigence is not protected by American power. If contemporary Arab leaders wish to spare themselves and their civilisation an undeterminate era of Israeli domination, they must adopt policies aimed at delinking the United States from Israel's regional ambition and aggressions. It is a challenge neither as difficult to meet, nor as risky as it may appear to the interests of Arab governments which have close ties to the United States. What is needed is a realistic understanding of American interests in the Middle East, and a sustained determination to establish positive linkages between American interests and policy.

The United States confronts a world environment unique in history. In international relations, political power is defined by a convergence of military and economic strength. Rarely before had the world witnessed such wide gaps between economic power on the one hand and military power on the other. Therein lie the dilemmas of American foreign policy. It is currently the world's paramount power which lacks, nevertheless, the attributes of sustained paramountcy. Militarily it has no equal, and no other centre of power evinces the will and capacity to assert itself globally. Yet, the United States does not any more exercise world hegemony in economic matters. New centres of economic power — in Europe and Asia — have merged. The US has lost its economic and strategic leverages on old allies. New centres of power, such as China, seem oblivious to American power. Hence if it is to sustain its paramount status, the US must hold new leverages over old allies — Europe and Japan — as well as potential challengers. This phenomenon explains the shift in world politics toward accelerated struggle for the control of world resources.

Europe, Japan and the merging economies of Eastern and Southern Asia are increasing their productive capabilities. Yet, by and large they lack natural resources, and are especially short of oil and gas. Therefore, states that exercise hegemony in the energy producing areas of the world can enjoy influence and power on world scale. It is to their credit that Israeli leaders sensed the opportunity and deployed all their lobbying capabilities to establish strategic linkages with the United States, a process that was vastly aided by Henry Kissinger. As American power augmented in the Middle East, Israel took credit for it. "We opened the door" is a common refrain of Israeli lobbyist.

There is perhaps no connection between US support for Israel and its expanded influence in the Arab world. Yet, the correlations are there. Arab trade and investment with the US have increased exponentially since 1970. Today more Arab countries are regarded as American allies than ever before. American presence, including military presence, in the Middle East is larger and more visible now than ever. American influence in the Middle East is more palpable than elsewhere in the world. The spooky fact is that US influence in the region has expanded in the last two decades in direct proportion to its phenomenal support for Israel. Americans, including policy makers, are an empirically inclined people. They deduce from what they experience. So why should they contemplate a change in their policy toward Israel?

The conviction has settled in Washington that Arab rulers so distrust each other that they secretly welcome the expansion of Israel as a power that can help police the region, aid regimes in trouble, and inhibit ambitions — Iranian, Iraqi, Egyptian, or Syrian. As long as America's policy makers are not disabused of this belief, Israel shall enjoy the unconditional and generous support of the superpower, and Middle Eastern future shall remain as dark and uncertain as it was in fifteenth century Spain. Oslo and Camp David agreements may occur but sovereignty will continue to slip from Arab grasp.



THE BODY of 23-year old Rashid Arafah is brought by ambulance to his home in Hebron on Tuesday. Arafah died of a bullet wound to his chest when two gun-carrying Jewish students opened fire on a group of Palestinians. Yesterday, Israel released on bail the two Jewish students whose action sparked fierce riots in Hebron. The pair also wounded another Palestinian when they opened fire with their automatic weapons. About 130,000 Jewish settlers, most of them armed by the Israeli military, live in heavily fortified enclaves in the West Bank and Gaza strip. *(photo:AP)*

Teetering on the edge

Palestinian-Israeli relations remain at their lowest ebb even after the Clinton-Netanyahu talks, and the prospect of a military flare-up has never been more real since Oslo, reports **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem

Palestinians expected little prior to Binyamin Netasnyahu's two hour meeting with President Clinton in Washington on 7 April. They got even less. Ducking a direct answer as to whether Clinton had demanded a freeze on Israel's settlement construction in the Occupied Territories, Netanyahu responded: "Our policy is clear: the construction at Har Homa will continue; construction in Jerusalem will continue; construction at the settlements will continue." Such comments "show Netanyahu does not want peace," was the weary reply of PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

It is unclear what Netanyahu does want, other than the mantra that Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (PA) "crush terrorism and all other Palestinian violence". But, three years into the Oslo process, a consensus is emerging that the crisis in Palestinian-Israeli relations has never been deeper. Nor has the prospect of real war in the Occupied Territories ever been closer.

From the moment bulldozers broke earth at Jebel Abu Ghneim last month, the Israeli army has been at "record" levels of alert, with tanks at the ready around most of Palestinian areas and Shin Bet agents "reactivated" inside them. Palestinian workers and traders are now enduring the third week of a total Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza. Meanwhile, clashes between Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers flare up on a daily basis, prompting one army official to admit that "we have returned to the era of the Intifada".

In such conditions, it takes very little for popular protests to escalate into full-fledged armed confrontations. It is an escalation that elements within the Jewish settler movement appear eager to ignite.

On 7 April, a settler from the Dolev settlement opened fire on Palestinians in Harbata village near Ramallah, leaving two wounded, one seriously. The settler claimed that he was acting in "self defence" after stones were thrown at his car. Palestinian eyewitnesses say the settler drove into the village, firing "indiscriminately".

It was a dress rehearsal for what happened the next day in Hebron. At around 10am, two Yeshiva (clerical) students from the Israeli-controlled area in Hebron used their army-issued Uzi machine guns to kill one Palestinian and wound three others. The students alleged the Palestinians had attacked them with acid. But a Palestinian shopkeeper who witnessed the incident said the students "arrested" the Palestinian and shot him at "point blank range". The army has said nothing. But it has detained the students.

On news of the killing, thousands of Palestinians stormed the de facto partition line that segregates the Israeli-controlled part of Hebron from the rest of the city, attacking soldiers with stones and petrol bombs. The army responded with rubber bullets and tear gas, slapping a curfew on the 20,000 Palestinians who live in the Israeli area. Palestinians also assailed with stones PA police trying to push them back from the frontline.

It was the worst violence in Hebron since the Har Homa crisis erupted, leaving a toll of two more Palestinians dead and over 100 injured, including nine police officers. At the funerals of the victims, thousands chanted for revenge. The PA's security chief in Hebron, Jibril Rajoub, called for "international protection of the Palestinians in Hebron".

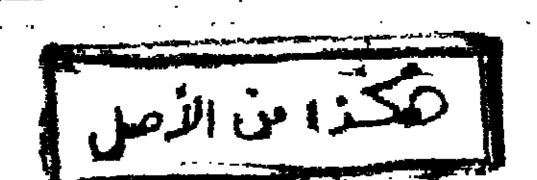
But Arafat is going to need more than "international protection" if Oslo is not consumed by the fire that is currently raging in the Occupied Territories. He is going to need international intervention, especially by the Americans.

Despite disclaimers by PA officials that the Netanyahu-Clinton meeting had "yielded nothing of value", a Palestinian delegation is expected to leave for Washington some time this week, following preliminary meetings on Tuesday between PA Minister of Higher Education Hanan Ashrawi, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Middle East Special Envoy Dennis Ross.

The Clinton administration has yet to go public on the "crude and preliminary ideas" it is offering to restart negotiations. But, according to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, a package is being evolved where the US would back Netanyahu's proposals for "accelerated negotiations" over six to nine months on Oslo's final status issues. During this schedule, Israel would commit itself not to take "unilateral" decisions, meaning that it would refrain from building new settlements and would "consult" with the PA ahead of the second West Bank redeployment set for September. Israel would also implement undertakings such as opening a free passage between Gaza and the West Bank, still outstanding from Oslo's interim agreement. But the precondition for all is that the PA fight "terrorism" and resume immediately security cooperation with Israel.

PA officials have not ruled out the idea of a "fast track" for the final status talks, despite suspicions that Netanyahu wants an acceleration less to reach a final settlement than to evade the further redeployments called for by Oslo. But, they insist, an accelerated process cannot be unconditional. On Monday, PA presidential adviser, Ahmed Tibi reiterated that "every initiative not based on a settlement freeze and formation of a system to ensure agreements are implemented, in conformity with UN resolutions 242 and 338, will not succeed and may even cause damage".

The critical issue is whether any future "freeze" would include Har Homa. After the events in Hebron, the mood on the Palestinian street is that it will have to.



Hungry for Euro-Atlanticism

The Hungarian foreign minister tells **Gamal Nkrumah** about his country's ambition to join the EU and NATO, and has a *comforting word* for old friends



Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs László Kovács was *in Cairo last week upon an invitation of Foreign Minister* Amr Moussa to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Hungary. The visit had the resonance of a historic counterpoint: today's Hungary, as that of a half-century ago, faces a historic about-face. Hungary has applied for EU membership, and NATO is preparing to include Hungary in the first round of enlargements to the east.

But what role does a landlocked nation of only 10 *million* people hope to play in the company of Western giants, and perhaps more to the point, of what value is Hungary to the West?

Hungary is one of Europe's most strategically located countries. *It lies at the crossroads of Europe's east* and west, north and south, and straddles the language divide between German and Slav nations.

For most Hungarians, integration into Western economic and defence institutions brings a promise of a more prosperous and secure future and a bigger role on the international stage.

"We neither overestimate nor underestimate the role that Hungary can play internationally. Last January, I visited Israel and the Palestinian territories and I met President Yasser Arafat in Bethlehem. One day I was with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and the next I was with President Arafat. It was certainly not a mission *of mediation. We do not want to act as go-betweens. But,* I think relations between the Palestinian Authority and Hungary, and especially economic cooperation, will contribute to the economic development of the Palestinian people. We can indirectly enhance the peace process," Kovács said.

Kovács hopes to assure Hungary's friends in the Middle East and Africa that his country's future role in post-Cold War Europe will not disrupt its traditionally strong ties with the Third World. Hungary's eagerness to join the EU does not blunt its wish to maintain close ties with the developing world and especially southern Mediterranean countries. "In 1995, when Hungary chaired the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I tried to involve more the countries of the southern Mediterranean, including Egypt, in closer cooperation with Europe. We saw cooperation between *the OSCE and the Mediterranean Basin countries* as crucial to Europe's security and stability," Kovács pointed out. "Europe is looking southwards [hoping] to embrace the entire Mediterranean Basin in its quest for economic and social stability," he said.

"We will not change our approach to the countries of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. On the contrary, we will be in a position to work more actively with the countries of other continents," Kovács said.

"Hungary's foreign policy orientation will not change with its admission into NATO and the EU. We already follow more or less EU foreign policy directives. Even though NATO does not have a coordinated foreign policy, *we share the same broad ideals and goals,*" Kovács said.

Hungary must measure up to the EU's exacting standards, and according to World Bank figures, it stands a better chance of doing so than any of its East and Central European neighbours.

Kovács sees full NATO membership as an unparalleled opportunity: "Hungary wants to be an integral part of the Europe-Atlantic community which we (view) as the family of advanced democracies. Therefore, we want to join both NATO and the EU. What we seek in NATO is certainly not shelter or protection. We see the enlargement of NATO as the eastern expansion of *stability in Europe. The number one security risk in* eastern and central Europe is the lack of stability. I think the enlargement of NATO will serve the interests of the whole region — including the interests of nations which will not join NATO soon."

Even Russia? "Yes, I do believe that the eastward expansion of NATO will serve the interests of Russia by providing [it with a] stable western frontier," Kovács said. He stressed that Hungary wants to allay Russian fears from NATO's expansion. Russia knows that NATO forces now outnumber Russian troops by a ratio of 2.8 to 1. In the event of Hungary and other East European nations joining NATO, the ratio will become 3.7 to 1.

"What we *expect from the EU is more than better* access to the markets of West Europe. We hope to get better access to the vast resources, including financial resources, as well as participation in the various development projects. I think our membership in the EU will bring benefits for the average Hungarian. The citizens of Hungary will become citizens of Europe," the Hungarian official added.

In a bid to join the Euro-Atlantic defence community, Hungary is cutting down on *military expenditure and* modernising its armed forces simultaneously.

What about the allegations that East European countries are using up the EU's aid funds that would have normally been allocated to southern Mediterranean countries? Are East European and southern Mediterranean countries now competing for EU funds? "I don't think that the competition between East Europe and the southern Mediterranean Basin countries for EU funds is any more serious than that between any other two aid-recipient regions of the world. Hungary is interested in the stability and development of the southern Mediterranean Basin countries. We have done our utmost to increase *cooperation between the OSCE and southern* Mediterranean countries," Kovács said.

"The official visit of Hungarian President Arpád Göncz to Egypt in March 1996 showed that Hungary attaches great importance to its ties with Egypt and the Arab world," Kovács said.

Actually, these ties go a long way back. The so-called *magari* — Arabic for "Hungarian" — trains formed the backbone of the Egyptian railway fleet in the 1960s and *1970s.*

In 1996, Hungarian exports to Egypt increased by some 64 per cent to a total of $41 million. Hungarian imports from Egypt rose by an extraordinary 478 per cent to a total of $21 million.

"In my meeting with Egyptian businessmen, I introduced Hungary as a potential partner for cooperation. Membership in NATO and the EU will enhance Hungary's attraction as a trading partner," Kovács said.

Pointing to a vigorous diplomatic initiative toward Arab countries, the Hungarian official added: "I would like to place my visit to Egypt in a larger context. Here in Cairo, I met Secretary General of the Arab League Esmat Abdel-Meguid. In the past two years I visited several Arab countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia— we recently established diplomatic relations with the Saudis. My visit to Riyadh was the very first time that a Hungarian foreign minister visited Saudi Arabia. I met with the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Hungary did not have any links with the Gulf countries during the Communist era."

NAM limelight on Arafat

REPRESENTATIVES of the *Non-Aligned Movement* (NAM) countries, meeting in New Delhi this week, gave their loudest ovation to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who charged in a powerful speech delivered at the meeting's opening session that Israeli settlement activities in East Jerusalem were "equal to a declaration of war, not only on the Palestinian people but also on the peace process."

Arafat's address to the NAM ministerial meeting on Monday came ahead of the crisis talks held in Washington later on the same day between President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. The Palestinian leader's speech reportedly "overshadowed" another powerful address made in the same session by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In his speech, Annan declared his support for NAM's call for major UN reform, especially in the Security Council.

"I am leading a thorough and wide-ranging review of the activities of the UN. Among them is reform of the Security Council," Annan told the representatives of 74 NAM countries.

In the photo Arafat is greeted by Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda, during a break in the two-day NAM conference. *(photo: AFP)*



The battle to unite Africa

The Zairean peace talks in Pretoria held few surprises — Kabila continues to maintain the upper hand. Can South Africa and Egypt do anything to stop Africa falling apart? asks **Gamal Nkrumah**

Post-apartheid South Africa is the continent's moral crowbar that must prise apart the crumbling stones of neo-colonial Africa. It is in this context that South Africa has undertaken to play a mediating role between the various African governments and their adversaries.

South Africa played no small role in putting the Angolan civil war on the back-burner. But nowhere is South Africa's determination to play a *mediating role more apparent than in the case* of Zaire. South African President Nelson Mandela made stringent efforts to persuade representatives of the Zairean government and those of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) to come to the negotiating table earlier this week.

However, at the same time, the ADFL's storming of Mbuji-Mayi, the capital of Zaire's diamond-rich central province, Kasai, points to the futility of Pretoria's efforts and the invincibility of the gun in determining Africa's political future.

As ADFL forces advanced into central and southern Zaire, the opposition parties in the country's capital, Kinshasa, withdrew support from the veteran opposition politician Etienne Tshisekedi. The people of the capital were seen on CNN and other international telecasts excitedly calling for ADFL leader Laurent-Desire Kabila to march into Kinshasa and topple the 32-year old regime of the ailing Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seku.

Tshisekedi, the polished civilian democrat, who was installed as Zairean premier last week, only to be thrown out of office by Mobutu, has *been forced to take a back seat. It is now Kabila,* the freedom fighter, who will determine the course of action and his country's future. The Zairean people have reached a verdict — Tshis*ekedi is no match for* Kabila.

Crucially, the Zairean opposition did not come to the Tshisekedi's rescue. Instead, the Zairean opposition is backing Kabila — the warrior from the bush. Is Kabila's popularity an ominous sign? Does this spell an end to hopes of Western-style democratic rule in a post-Mobutu Zaire?

Kabila's fight against Mobutu is a high-intensity war that has caught the public imagination throughout Africa. Kabila looks destined to win — he has already won the battle for the hearts and minds of the Zairean people.

In desperately poor countries like Zaire, people want change and social justice — and not necessarily the Western-style democracy adopted by South Africa.

Barely five years after ridding itself of apart*heid and instituting black majority rule, South* African companies are leading a new onslaught on the African continent. Mineral-rich countries are targeted and South Africa has a lot at stake in Zaire. The fall of the strategic diamond mining hub of Mbuji-Mayi can only be matched by the fall of the copper and cobalt mining centre of Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich Province of Shaba — formerly Katanga. With the imminent fall of Shaba, the Zairean civil war has reached a turning point. Zaire will never be the same again after the fall of Mbuji-Mayi, the country's fourth largest city and Lubumbashi, its second *largest.*

South Africa's deputy foreign minister, Aziz Pahad, co-chaired the Zairean peace talks earlier this week with Mohamed Sahnoun, the United Nations special envoy, who also represents the Organisation of African Unity. Top of the agenda was the ousting of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seku. Deputy South African President Thabo Mbeki made several appearances at the conference in an attempt to ease tensions between the Zairean government and opposition forces. But it is clear that Kabila holds all the cards now.

The *AFDL* are negotiating from a position of strength. Kabila has vowed to storm Kinshasa within the next few months. He is not interested in a cease-fire, even though he might consider a truce, nor does he want a power-sharing agreement with either Mobutu or Tshisekedi.

Civil wars continue to rage in Africa, as a conference in Cairo last week on the roles of Egypt and South Africa in Africa heard. In Asia and Latin America, foreign investment spurs rapid economic growth. Africa receives a mere two per cent of the world's foreign capital investments. Still, 24 African countries now show encouraging economic growth figures of over four per cent this year. Zaire is not among them.

Widening inequality poses a growing threat to the social cohesion and political stability of African societies. Some societies, like South Africa's, are torn apart — indeed defined — by gross earning inequalities. Colin McCarthy, professor of economics at Stellenbosch University, *put it bluntly, "The combined gross domestic* product of Sub-Saharan countries, barring South Africa, is equivalent to the GDP of Belgium. It does not make much economic sense to concentrate efforts on developing special ties with an economy the size of Belgium's while ignoring larger markets in Europe, Asia and the Americas."

Willie Breytenbach, professor of political science at the University of Stellenbosch and a member of the prestigious Africa Institute along with McCarthy, agrees. "From the perspective of developing countries, it is ideal that southern *coalitions be established first, before they are* translated into action in pursuit of South-North dialogue. Our two nations are uniquely placed to lead in this respect," Breytenbach told *the Weekly.* Both he and McCarthy attended the Cairo conference.

Egypt, with 61.4 million people, and South Africa, with 43.5 million, are among Africa's most populous nations. The two countries are also among the continent's richest — Egypt has a gross domestic product of $74 billion and South Africa has a GDP of $136 billion in a continent where the average GDP is $10 billion. Egypt's and South Africa's per capita income — $1,220 (up from $695 in 1994) and $3,130 respectively — are far higher than the continental average of $650, although Egypt's literacy rate at 48 per cent is slightly lower than the African average of 50 per cent. "The point really is this," said Breytenbach. "These social factors indicate that although Egypt and South Africa are relatively well-ranked in the African context, neither are really rich and both are challenged by often unfavourable conditions in the quest to grow economically and to consolidate democracy."

So, does that mean that Egypt and South Africa cannot join forces to tackle economic development and trade issues in Africa? Not quite. "Egypt has a vast experience of dealing with the issues of South-South cooperation, South-North dialogue, relations with the United States and in peacekeeping among the volatile nations of the region. South Africa and Egypt are uniquely *placed to substantiate the themes that are* self-evident in the post-Cold War world, interdependent North-South global order. This is where synergy must be sought: if Egypt can improve conditions in North Africa and the Middle East, and South Africa in Southern Africa, then surely Africa is better off," Breytenbach told *the Weekly.*

The Assistant Minister for African Affairs at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Marwan Badr, explained that Egypt is in the process of establishing the Cairo Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peace*keeping in Africa. "To date the centre has held* three training courses for senior officers and diplomats and is establishing working relations with a number of similar institutions in Africa and all over the world," Badr said.

Areas of high priority in Egypt's African policy are the Nile Basin and Horn of Africa countries. Badr recently attended the conference on conflict in the Great Lakes region in the Togolese capital Lome. "The River Nile remains a vital artery linking Egypt to the heart of Africa. It, therefore; should come as no surprise that the African identity represents an essential component *of Egypt's national heritage," Badr said.*

Minister of Trade and Supply Ahmed Goueli, and Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz Mohamed, the chairman of the National Bank of Egypt and the Commercial International Bank, both agreed. Africans might be poor, they said, but the potential for economic development and trade is vast as it has an exceptionally rich resource base. Africa's resources, though, can only be fully developed when civil wars are over. Which is why Western companies are today clamouring for Zaire's Kabila.

Cementing old ties

Sorour's trip to Moscow rekindled the old flame in the Russian-Egyptian friendship, writes **Abdel-Malik Khalil** from Moscow

*People's Assembly Speaker Fathi Sorour paid an official visit to the Rus*sian Federation from 2 to 6 April. During his visit, Sorour held talks with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Upper House Speaker Yegor Storev. Sorour also met with Gennady Zyuganov, leader of Russia's largest opposition party, the Communist Party.

In his meeting with Chernomyrdin, the Egyptian speaker outlined Egypt's economic reform programme and the current effort to create a new Delta in *the Western Desert. Russia, it should* be recalled, played a critical part in the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the sixties. Russian technical expertise is as vital today for Egypt as it was three decades ago.

Sorour's talks with the Russian upper house speaker focused on the situation in the Middle East and NATO's eastward expansion. NATO is scheduled to convene a summit in the Spanish capital Madrid this summer. During the summit, the Western alliance will officially invite some East European countries — most likely Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — to join NATO.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin is furious about NATO plans to expand eastwards. "We are against NATO's *approach towards the frontiers of the* Russian Federation," he said recently. Moscow wants legally binding Western reassurances that NATO's eastern expansion will not threaten Russia's national security. To date, NATO has only offered a non-binding charter. *Russia's main request is that NATO* should not establish military infrastructure on the territories of the new NATO members. NATO refuses to concede that point to Moscow.

Russian opposition parties severely criticise the Yeltsin government for allegedly kowtowing to Western dictates. This week, the leader of the newly formed Russian Republican People's Party (RRPP) warned that the demoralised Russian army must be reinvigorated. Military setbacks in *the breakaway republic of Chechnya,* drastic military budget setbacks and low pay have all brought morale in the Russian army to an all-time low.

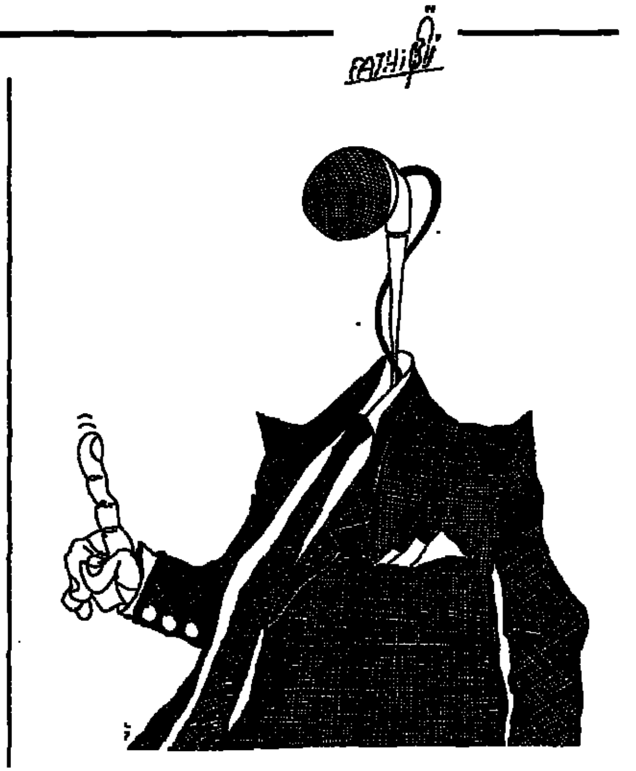
Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznyov held a reception to toast Sorour and accompanying Egyptian parlia*mentarians. He invited Sorour to ad*dress the Russian parliament. In his address to the Duma, Sorour expressed hope for just peace to be established in the Middle East, noting the grave threat that current Israeli settlement building poses to the peace process.

Sorour expressed his appreciation of the Russian Parliament for condemning Israel's plans to build settlements in East Jerusalem. Sorour paid tribute to Russian civilisation and de*scribed Russia as a major contributor* to the formation of a new international order. Russia still is a world power, he assured his hosts. He appealed to Russia to play a more active part in the Middle East peace process and said that Egyptian-Russian ties re*main close despite the collapse of the* Soviet Union. This, he pointed out, is a powerful testimony to the inherent strength of these ties.

Commenting on the long-term effect of the power imbalance in the Middle East and other regions, Sorour stated that it is useless to ignore reality. Current international relations, he pointed out, are not *based* on the *realities of the* non-Western world and do not reflect the interests of the international community as a whole. Contemporary international relations do not take into account non-Western perspectives. In an apparent reference to American hegemony, Sorour concluded that a multi-polar world would be more stable and balanced than a uni-polar one.







Integration or domination

Arab countries need economic adjustment polices that work, lest regional economic integration becomes a recipe for Israeli domination, writes Khaled Fouad Sherif

Economic integration is the talk of the town. Unfortunately, however, the economic profiles of the countries of the region are drastically different today from what they were a decade ago.

The next two decades are crucial for our region. They will not only determine whether the non-Gulf oil Arab states will integrate as an economic power both in the Middle East and beyond the boundaries of the region, but also whether the terms of future trade agreements such as GATT will be negotiated or dictated.

In the non-Gulf oil Arab states (defined as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Iraq), the GDP dropped in real terms by over 23 per cent through the 14 years ending in 1996.

These countries receive over 11 per cent of the world's total food imports and consume approximately 17 per cent of its grain exports. Their total outstanding debts are estimated to exceed $160 billion, with the servicing of this debt, alone, equaling over $12 billion per year. Furthermore, their trade balance, including oil exports, reached a deficit of $11 billion in 1996, compared to a surplus of $4 billion in 1985. And, 2.2 million new jobs will have to be created annually to guard against widespread unemployment.

These figures are telling of the problems confronting the non-Gulf oil Arab states and their economies which are highly indebted, food-dependent, over-populated, low-growth economies. Moreover, the numbers paint a disturbing picture of what these countries have to show for their nearly-three decade long development efforts.

On the other hand, there is Israel, a country which is now an economic power house. Its per capita GDP is fast approaching $16,000, comparable to that of Saudi Arabia, and significantly above the non-Gulf oil Arab states average of $680 per annum. The Israelis have developed, and are continuing to develop, their main areas of comparative advantage such as electronics and agriculture.

But Israel's economic achievements may not necessarily be a blessing. With such high levels of per capita income it will be very hard for it to compete in the international marketplace. Therefore, it would be to its benefit to have a large, inexpensive labour force — its Palestinian neighbours, perhaps? Well, after all, the unemployment rate in Palestine is well over 70 per cent. But even with seven of every ten Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories unemployed, the unfortunate lack of skill development over the past three decades probably limits them as an option, especially since Israel's game has become technology.

This brings me to my most important point. Have we developed our areas of comparative advantage over the years? Aside from oil, what do the non-Gulf oil Arab states really export. Egypt exports people mostly to the Gulf, Tunisia has some tourism, but little else. And, as mentioned earlier, we are highly indebted, have high rates of unemployment, have witnessed the equivalent of severe economic stagnation in the region and have become heavily dependent on food imports and aid. Thus, what does the economic integration of the 1990s really mean? What is it likely to mean over the next two decades? If we are not careful the word "integration" can quickly be replaced by another word "domination".

This is why we can no longer afford to continue to fall behind. We need structural adjustment that works — structural adjustment that will move us from stagnation to not only real economic growth but development. After all, one can easily ask the question: of all the non-Gulf oil Arab states, which one can we point to as an economic success story? Who is the "tiger" of the non-Gulf oil Arab region? If the answer is that there isn't one, then that says a lot. At this point economic integration with Israel will do little for us but a lot for them. For proof, look at the benefits they have reaped just as a result of the removal of economic sanctions.

The writer is a public enterprise specialist with the World Bank's African Technical Department.

MPs slam new investment bill

Over the last two weeks, the People's Assembly Economic Committee has been the scene of sharp debates over a long-awaited bill on investment guarantees and incentives

After vociferous criticism leveled by some members of a parliamentary committee against the government proposed Investment Guarantees and Incentives Law last month, the People's Assembly will discuss a revised version of the bill in an upcoming session. The 46-article bill, which is aimed at boosting economic development and accelerating the flow of direct foreign investments into Egypt, is part of a series of economic legislation reform initiatives being introduced by the government.

But despite a generous package of investment guarantees and incentives such as extended tax exemptions and protection from nationalisation of industries and assets, the bill fell victim to a wave of criticism by business MPs when it was first submitted to the parliament's Economic Committee for discussion on 21 March.

Disturbed by this opposition, Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri held an urgent meeting with key cabinet members and MPs on 31 March as a means of overcoming the objections. When the meeting was concluded, the Assembly's Economic Committee met again that same evening and approved the bill in principle. The committee then passed it to the full Assembly.

The objections to the bill were not entirely new, but merely revised versions of old concerns voiced by businessmen over the last three years. As far back as 1994, members of the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) objected to the initial form of a unified investment law on the grounds that it leaves investors and businessmen exposed to a host of bureaucratic red-tape hurdles. These bureaucratic obstacles, they argued, would stand in the way of securing the licences and approvals needed for businesses to be eligible for tax incentives and guarantees.

In response to their complaints, the government, after one and a half years of cabinet deliberations, decided to divide the unified bill into three laws, the first of which aimed at providing red-tape-free investment guarantees and incentives. However, no sooner was the government's decision made public than the bill came under a new wave of criticism. Again leading the pack was the EBA and its chairman, Said El-Tawil. This time, the objections were raised about Article 3 of the bill which, argued EBA officials, opened the door for the nationalisation of investment projects in the due process of law. Mubarak, however, adamantly refuted this argument, saying, "We experienced nationalisation before, and it proved to be a failure".

Despite these assurances, businessmen were still wary when the bill was submitted to the Economic Committee. Talaat Mustafa, a contractor and MP from Alexandria, said that not only is the bill's tax exemption structure ambiguous and complicated, but it also negatively affects the existing incentives. And, argued MP Abdallah Tayel, a banker in Menoufiya Governorate, in conflict with its aim, the bill will actually create more cumbersome bureaucratic hurdles that must be overcome.

Tayel noted that although the General Investment Authority (GIA) played a large role in facilitating investment procedures and has proven experience in licensing procedures, the new bill, for no discernible reason, seeks to replace it with another, yet-to-be-defined administrative authority. This new body will be entrusted with corporate licensing procedures. But according to El-Ganzouri, the GIA will retain its responsibility for licensing most new investment projects. Governorate licensing offices, he added, will be charged only with issuing building licences.

Adding fuel to the fire, Ahmed Sharafeddin, the Egyptian Investment Guarantee Company's legal consultant, argued that the law creates a customs distinction between imported and locally-produced goods in Egyptian free zones. This is in clear violation of the GATT Agreement, which decrees the unifying of customs exemptions for local and foreign products, he said. As a result, cautioned Sharafeddin, Egypt may be confronted with objections from the international community because of this legal distinction.

Not to be left out, the EBA, represented in the Economic Committee by the chairman of its legal committee, Hussein El-Ibrashi, submitted a memo to the parliament listing 25 major objections to the draft law. Topping this list was the concern that tax exemptions will still be too modest since the new bill restricts them to a short period of time.

But according to Public Sector Minister Atef Ebeid, the draft law is a very progressive investment step. Ebeid argued that not only does the law provide investors with tax exemptions of 10 years for projects in the new industrial communities, 20 years in distant desert areas and five years for other areas, it also gives investors access to free land and soft loans.

The debate continues, with other MPs representing workers arguing that the draft law favours "capitalists" at the expense of the workers. The Assembly is scheduled to resume its discussions on the amended bill. So far, five articles have been tackled without any changes being introduced.

Catching up with labour

Despite government efforts to reduce unemployment by attracting new investments, the problem is far from being resolved. Mona El-Fiqi investigates

Some may have taken pride in the fact that Egypt's economic growth rate over the past few years has risen from 1.5 to four per cent per year. But, argued participants in a conference held recently to discuss ways of combating unemployment while boosting economic development, this rate of growth will not produce enough jobs for the roughly 500,000 graduates and nearly two million other individuals now seeking work. Currently, the market can only absorb 500,000 new workers per year.

The beginning of the end, however, is in sight, state government officials. Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri noted that Egypt, in line with the current economic reform programme, expects to realise an annual economic growth rate of seven per cent by the year 2000 and increase the levels of investment. Coupled with the government's promise to create three million new jobs by the year 2002, El-Ganzouri predicted that the unemployment rate would ultimately drop to five per cent from the present 10 per cent.

But critics of the reform programme assert that privatisation, an integral part of the programme, could in fact increase the unemployment rate should privatised companies begin to lay off workers.

According to Zohdi El-Shami, a member of the leftist Tagammu Party's Economic Committee, this phasing out has already begun, albeit in an indirect manner. Employees of public sector companies, he maintained, no longer have a chance of becoming appointed staff and, therefore, lack the job security enjoyed by their appointed colleagues.

The reduction in the number of public sector employees, explain privatisation officials, is not an indication that selling off public sector firms will raise the unemployment rate.

Ismail Arman, a human resource development expert in the minister of the public sector's office, explained that after four years of privatisation, the number of workers employed by the public sector decreased from 1.6 million to 918,000, as a result of retirement, early retirement or the sale of public sector enterprises either to the workers or to the public.

In this context, employee shareholder associations (ESA) have played a key role in protecting the jobs of workers whose companies are on the privatisation slate. The government provided ESAs with a stake in 11 fully-privatised public sector firms which, consequently, allowed nearly 40,000 workers to buy into the company in which they were employed. Similarly, another 40,000 workers moved from the ranks of public sector employees to those of the private sector when their companies, under law no. 154, became joint-stock companies.

In companies sold in full to one anchor investor, said Arman, the situation was even more promising. In the case of both the Egyptian Bottling Company (Pepsi-Cola) and Al-Nasr Bottling Company (Coca-Cola), the number of workers has increased by more than 2,000 since their privatisation.

According to Arman, the real cause of unemployment is not privatisation, but the fact that the number of graduates per year by far exceeds the demand for new labour. "In order to solve this problem, the educational system should be adjusted to meet the needs of the market," he commented.



photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

Day labourers waiting for 'labour contractors' and a day's wage. Will their ranks swell with privatisation?

Officials, however, argue that they have already begun tackling this problem. While in 1996, the unemployment rate for high school and university graduates stood at 9.4 per cent, this figure is expected to drop to 8.7 per cent in 1997, said Abdel-Qader El-Asser, a counsellor at the Ministry of Manpower.

"The Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics and the Ministry of Manpower issue a quarterly report highlighting the sectors which require additional labour," he said. This information is used by the ministry to help direct new graduates toward potential employers.

"In order to help reduce the unemployment rate, in 1995 the ministry helped secure the appointment of 130,000 graduates and, in 1996, helped another 226,000 graduates secure overseas jobs," said the ministry official. Moreover, the ministry provides technical training for the graduates through the various technical training centres.

Fighting the unemployment battle on another front, the Social Fund for Development (SFD), promotes and sponsors several human resources, community development and small and micro-enterprise programmes. As a result of these programmes said Ezzeddin Shawkat, the SFD's public relations manager, the organisation has provided roughly 300,000 job opportunities during its first phase of operations from April 1993 to December 1996. During its $800 million second phase, the SFD is expected to provide another 400,000 permanent jobs by the year 2000.

The capital of this phase will also be used in a variety of programmers such as early retirement payments and retraining workers in privatised companies.

A rating for growth

Introduction of rating companies in the Egyptian capital market will have a positive impact on its performance, writes Mona Qassem

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has recently approved the establishment of the first Egyptian rating company. The new company is responsible for thoroughly examining the performance of companies listed on the stock exchange by studying their fiscal situation, liquidity and inventory levels. It will then assign the shares of each of these companies a certain rating. The ratings will not be based solely on the performance of these firms, but also their performance in light of the country's economic and political situation and the performance of other companies in the same sector. The complete details of these ratings will then be available to investors to help them make sound investment decisions.

The new company will be invaluable in this kind of emerging market which still lacks sufficient transparency. Currently, companies whose shares are traded on the stock exchange are, according to CMA regulations, committed to announcing their quarterly results. Moreover, performance indicators such as closing share prices, earning per share (EPS) and price/earnings ratio (P/E) are available. However, this information is insufficient for investors to draw a clear picture of a company's relative strength or position in a particular sector.

Furthermore, rating companies would help accelerate the privatisation programme by presenting complete statistical information on the companies being offered for privatisation. This kind of information would be invaluable for local and international investors, as well as international rating companies.

There are also other benefits to a company specialised in rating securities. For example, it would allow investors and investment fund managers to accurately calculate the risk and yield for shares in listed companies, consequently making investments in the Egyptian capital market more appealing.

Additionally, the presence of companies specialised in evaluating and sorting securities will provide Egyptian companies an incentive to enhance their financial position, resolve whatever internal problems they face and improve the quality of their products and services in order to earn a strong rating.

And, equally important, the time is ripe for the introduction of this kind of rating activity given that the market is currently trying to meet all integrated capital market requirements, especially after setting up the clearance companies and the new Central Depository System.

Market report

Maritime bank share-floating

400
380
360
340
320
300
Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu

THE GENERAL Market Index witnessed a marginal drop of 0.62 points during the week ending 3 April, and closed at 381.42 points. Similarly, total market turnover witnessed a slump as only LE234 million in trades were logged compared to LE314 million the week before.

In the manufacturing sector, milling companies had a week of varied performance with three of the six companies on the exchange gaining momentum. Shares of the Middle Egypt Mills were the sector's biggest gainers, registering a 7.38 per cent increase before closing at LE60.65. However, shares of the East Delta Mills Company suffered the greatest losses in the sector, losing 3.13 per cent of their opening value before leveling off at LE81.5.

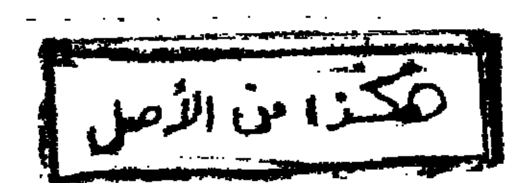
The index for the financial sector dropped by 3.4 points to end at 579.46. Shares of the Alexandria Commercial Maritime Bank, however, gained 10.25 per cent of their opening value to close at LE28.18. This increase came amid news that two million shares of the bank's equity will be offered for public subscription. In terms of total value of shares traded, it was the Commercial International Bank (CIB) which led the way with LE20.3 million of its shares changing hands. Its stock, however, dropped by LE5.06 to close at LE79.

The charges and allegations being hurled around about Islamic banks seem not to have affected the Faisal Islamic Bank's stock, which registered a 10.24 per cent increase in value and closed at LE197.28.

Back in the manufacturing sector, the United Housing and Development Company jumped to the front lines of the market, capturing 8.68 per cent of total trading. The company's stock gained LE4.45 per share to close at LE27.45.

In all, the shares of 51 companies increased in value, 49 decreased and 33 remained unchanged.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**



Tale of two Turkeys

Erbakan continues to puzzle observers as he bows to the Islamists, then doffs his hat to the Western world. Where is this tango taking the Turks? wonders **Eric Rouleau**

"We don't know who is running this country anymore, the coalition government or the army," a Turkish minister, speaking on condition of anonymity, recently exclaimed in anger. Many Turks are no longer even asking the question. They know that the army — which, since Ataturk, has considered itself the guardian of the secular republic — has considerably tightened its grip on power in the past few years, especially since the accession to government, ten months ago, of the fundamentalist Rafah (Welfare) Party.

The military's influence had diminished gradually since the re-establishment of a democratic government in 1983. It had even disappeared entirely under the leadership of President Turgut Ozal, who died in 1993, to such an extent that the former head of state had driven the general chief of staff to resign when he decided to involve Turkey in the Gulf War against the army's advice.

Since then, much has changed. On 4 February, for instance, tanks rolled out into Ercan, in the suburbs of Ankara, while a public meeting, organised by the local mayor, was being held to protest Israeli policy in Jerusalem. The army was expressing its dissatisfaction with the speeches being made, among them that of the Iranian ambassador, who allegedly made references to the *Shari'a*. The mayor was arrested and judged guilty of having "disturbed public order".

Less than a month later, the leaders of the armed forces communicated to Necmettin Erbakan, the head of state, a barely veiled ultimatum to implement immediately twenty measures intended to "preserve the state's secular character".

Was this the real reason for this fist slammed down on the table? Or was the main intention to force Erbakan to choose between resigning and humiliating submission? The highest military echelons asked him, among other things, to prevent his party's officials from "engaging in Islamist propaganda", especially on radio and television. No definition was provided as to the nature of "Islamist propaganda".

Erbakan was also required to close down all Qur'an schools. No justification was forthcoming, although Islamic (and therefore Qur'anic) instruction is mandatory in primary and secondary schools according to the present Constitution, the very document drawn up and adopted in 1982 at the army's instigation, before the military relinquished the power it had confiscated from civilians two years before. How could Qur'an schools be closed down when more than 50,000 Turkish children are educated in Islamic schools (or *imam khatib* schools, as they are called) financed by the state?

Erbakan was equally ordered to refrain from building mosques in the downtown areas of Istanbul and Ankara. Available statistics, however, indicate that Erbakan's predecessors — all heading "secular" governments — ordered the construction of several hundred mosques financed by taxpayers. Furthermore, the prime minister, who had planned to make the veil (or Islamic scarf) optional in institutions where it is currently banned, was called upon to put aside this project.

The Turkish prime minister's first reaction was to dig in his heels in the name of "defending democracy". He emphasised that the army's demands were no more than "recommendations" formulated by the National Security Council, within which military leaders preside side by side with civilians, and whose role, as defined by the Constitution, is merely consultative. He was right, in theory, but in practice this body has served mainly to ensure the army's predominance in matters related to territorial integrity, security, and the secular character of the Turkish republic. Furthermore, Erbakan insisted, in vain, that parliament was responsible for monitoring the government's policy. The media loudly denounced this "scandal", and a number of editorialists implicitly or explicitly requested that the army seize power in order to "prevent the insidious Islamisation" of Turkey. Soon after, however, the United States made it clear that a putsch would no doubt isolate Turkey internationally, and cut it off from the European Union in particular.

Several Rafah officials exhorted Erbakan to present his resignation. Had he not already given in too far to the civilian and military establishment, thus running the risk of depriving the Islamist party of an identity and its voters?

Last December, the prime minister had condoned the expulsion from the military of around sixty officers and lieutenants suspected of Islamist sympathies. In general, his positions were diametrically opposed to those Rafah had defended before its arrival to power. Erbakan and his deputies voted in favour of military cooperation treaties with Israel, the enemy of the Arab and Muslim world. They did the same when the chief of staff declared his support for the continued presence of Anglo-American troops supervising Iraqi territory from the base at Incirlik. Erbakan even suspended criticism of NATO and the European Union, while suggesting shyly that these organisations should respect Turkey's national interests.

The prime minister probably reached the limits of acceptability as far as his supporters were concerned when he paid homage to "the great Ataturk", and declared his support for "secularism" — a "tolerant" secularism, as he often reiterates, like that in force in France or the United States.

In other words, Erbakan is censuring Turkish officials for being more anti-Muslim than they are secular.

To right the balance in the Islamists' eyes, however, the head of the Turkish government took a number of initiatives aimed to satisfy them. He closed a deal worth $22 billion with the Islamic Republic of Iran whereby a huge natural gas pipeline will connect the two countries. He attempted, without success, to normalise relations with Libya. He suggested the establishment of a common market of sorts grouping eight Islamic countries, and went so far as to suggest, with no trace of humour, that this G-8 will one day provide a counter-balance to the Western, Christian G-7.

These initiatives, however, aroused more ire in Washington, where Rafah is suspected of wanting to stretch out the close relations the US has enjoyed with Turkey, than in the military. The Turkish generals were more incensed by his declarations and projects, which clearly aimed to marginalise them within the state.

Erbakan and his friends had indeed begun to declare that it was time to "democratise" the very institutions that had been shaped under the military regime of 1980-82. Islamist leaders, for instance, were calling for the subordination of the National Security Council to parliament, and for the amendment of the Constitution to this end. It is highly probable that the aim was in fact to do away with an institution which, as mentioned previously, serves the high echelons of the army as an interventionist instrument. Another of Erbakan's suggestions: to submit the decisions of the Supreme Military Council to arbitration in the courts, and thereby eliminate any discretionary moves. This would make it impossible to discharge military men without proof of their guilt — for example, membership in the Islamist party.

Paradoxically, TUSIAD, the syndicate which represents the heavy-weight bosses, has adopted stances very close to those of the Islamist party despite its determinedly secular orientation. In a public report two months ago, which aroused the anger of high-ranking army officials, TUSIAD not only spoke out in favour of reforming the National Security Council's status; it also criticised the other privileges which the 1980 putsch leaders had granted themselves. It called for the elimination of the constitutional article which forbids the pursuit in justice of those who committed crimes or misdemeanours under the military regime, as well as the article which places the chief of staff above the minister of defence.

In a move guaranteed to encounter opposition from almost all the traditional parties, TUSIAD also recommended the deletion of all constitutional articles which restrict individual and public freedoms. Turkey's democratisation, the report added, also requires the reform of various laws, especially those pertaining to political parties and the press, as well as the electoral system.

One of the most daring measures put forth by TUSIAD touches on the redefinition of the concept of citizenship, in other words bringing into question the principle of Jacobinism — borrowed from the French republic — which excludes the recognition of any ethnic or religious community as such. The TUSIAD report, incidentally, did not attempt to dissimulate its objective: to grant the Kurds specific cultural rights, among them the use of Kurdish in education and the media.

It is clear that influential entrepreneurs in Turkey are convinced that the confrontation between secularists and Islamists only dissimulates the true causes of the crisis: the war against the Kurds continues, war profiteers are still amassing illegal profits, corruption devours the political world and the security forces, and the repression of pro-Kurdish parties and organisations, journalists and writers calling for peace and state democratisation proceeds.

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators chanting "No military regime, and no *Shari'a* dictatorship" in the past weeks reflect the feelings of a large swathe of Turkish opinion, including the business community, mainly concerned with Turkey's admission into the Western world, and particularly the European Union. The authors of the TUSIAD report clearly express this will: "It is no longer possible for two Turkeys — that of the private sector, integrated into the modern world, and that of the state apparatus, which has excluded itself — to co-exist."

In search of definitions

Allegations that the Copenhagen Declaration was a stab in the back of the united front against normalisation are puzzling, writes **Lutfi El-Kholi**, because circumstances for a fruitful dialogue are especially propitious — but also because many of the accusers are themselves guilty of dialogue in the first degree



Some opponents of the Copenhagen Declaration, which laid the foundations for the International Alliance for an Arab-Israeli Peace, believe that, as long as regional and international realities preclude the possibility of war, peace has become the only viable solution. This peace can be attained through a just and comprehensive political settlement between all parties to the conflict. Such a settlement, however, cannot be reached through negotiations such as those currently taking place between two unevenly matched sides: Israel, in a position of strength bolstered by its massive nuclear arsenal and its de facto possession of Arab territory, and the Arabs, especially the Palestinians, in the current circumstances of weakness, deterioration and fragmentation.

The inevitable results of unequal negotiations are agreements concluded "*under duress*" such as the Oslo Accords. Negotiations under such conditions are neither an appropriate nor a secure mechanism for achieving real peace. Therefore, a new mechanism must be brought into play, one that can serve as an alternative to both war and negotiations.

What alternative mechanism do the advocates of this trend propound? The Arabs, they suggest, should refrain from establishing any form whatsoever of contact, at any level and for any purpose, with Israel or with individual Israeli citizens or groups, until Israel agrees to a just and comprehensive peace. Israel must agree to meet certain obligations if the Arab blockade against normalisation is to be lifted. It must restore all Arab territories occupied since 1967, withdraw from southern Lebanon, accept the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as its capital, dismantle all Israeli settlements in these areas and dismantle its nuclear arsenal.

In addition, some insist that Israel should renounce the Zionist ideology upon which the state was founded on the grounds that it is a racist and expansionist ideology.

Only when Israel yields to the pressures brought to bear upon it by the Arabs' refusal of normalisation will the circumstances be propitious for negotiating just and equitable peace agreements, instituting peaceful relationships and opening channels of dialogue among intellectuals. Until such time, however — so runs the argument — if the Arabs do not impose a total blockade on normalisation, the balance of power will remain skewed in favour of Israel.

Arab intellectuals who persist in condemning dialogue continue to view Israel as a single, immutable bloc committed in perpetuity to its racist Zionist enterprise. No meaningful distinction, they insist, can be drawn between the various political parties. All Israelis are ultimately the enemies of the Arabs and the Palestinians. Now that open warfare has unfortunately become impossible, they argue, the only alternative is to seek a just and comprehensive peace. It is true that there are forces for peace inside Israel; they are, however, too marginal to have any significant impact on the peace process. To open up channels of communication with them, therefore, would be futile. In fact, it would bring more harm than good since, the argument goes, it would create a breach in the Arab front against normalisation.

Consequently, the International Alliance for an Arab-Israeli Peace represents a dangerous manifestation of what this trend calls the united Arab front against normalisation, precisely because this alliance was the outcome of a dialogue between Arab and Israeli intellectuals. The dialogue, of course, may have been held with Israelis who are opposed to their government and who have condemned and actively worked against its policies of occupation, oppression and aggression in numerous political, social and cultural fora. "So what?" demand the sceptics. "Camouflage and tactics mean nothing. The only true test of credibility is for these Israelis to renounce their Israeli citizenship and identity, to leave Israel and to return to their countries of origin. Only then can dialogue with them be legitimate and untarnished by the taint of normalisation."

Of course, one might ask, what benefit would the Arabs derive from a dialogue if Israeli peace activists and supporters of Arab rights leave Israel and are no longer in a position to influence their government and offset the extremist forces opposed to peace? One will find oneself back to square one, however: "As long as these people remain in Israel, they are an inseparable part of the Zionist state. To talk with them is to move toward normalisation with the enemy." In other words, the Copenhagen Declaration has accomplished an Israeli aim. It broke through a united front, at least in terms of culture and ideology.

The central idea, then, is that normalisation is a weapon in the war for peace. Therefore, while various peripheral objections have been made regarding the role of intellectuals, their involvement in negotiations and their presumption to speak on behalf of a larger group of intellectuals, or even the Arab people, normalisation remains the pivotal argument.

This narrow, insular way of thinking epitomises a defeatist withdrawal from the true battlefield and its changing realities. Anti-normalisation activists believe that their stance represents a commitment to Arab solidarity and resistance to the enemy. In this perspective, the enemy is still a collection of Zionist gangs able to secure, through deceit and Western support, a foothold in Palestine, later expanding to occupy all of Palestine as well as land belonging to other Arab countries.

This perpetually regurgitated image of the self and the enemy, fed by a curious aloofness to reality and a reluctance to recognise change is, in my opinion, entirely responsible for the series of Arab defeats, both political and military. Anyway, who are we to uphold Arab solidarity when both the Palestinian National Authority and the opposition draw a sharp distinction between dialogue and cooperation with pro-peace forces in Israel, on the one hand, and activities that serve the interests of occupation and repression, on the other? Should we reject this distinction? Do we tell the Palestinians: Sorry, but we in the rest of the Arab world know your situation better than you do, even if you are immediately and directly involved in the intense and bitter confrontation on a daily basis inside Palestine?

Arab thinking has become stultified by propaganda. The critical, objective analysis of history has been put on hold and creativity and ingenuity have become anathema. It has become inconceivable that, in this conflict as in other major human conflicts, when repeated battles, either wars between standing armies or popular revolutionary struggle, have failed to eliminate or subdue the enemy, the only logical course is for the conflicting parties to seek recourse to a political settlement. The only way to bring such a settlement about is through negotiations. The negotiating process, which naturally takes place on an official level between the governments of the countries involved or between the governments and revolutionary leaderships, is, at least in its initial phases, extremely precarious, particularly when one side has negotiating advantages, such as the de facto possession of occupied territory.

It is at this juncture that the objective need emerges for the intellectual forces on both sides of the conflict to open dialogue, the purpose of which is to generate a new cultural climate in which a truly just, comprehensive and lasting peace can become a possibility. Peace is not a mechanical equation reflecting relative superiority at a given point in time. Rather, it is a delicate balance between conflicting interests and visions of conditions for peaceful coexistence.

At any rate, had any of the anti-normalisation intellectuals read the Copenhagen Declaration objectively, they would have noted that it contained no reference to "normalisation". The series of dialogues that made up this conference had only one item on the agenda: to explore the possibility of building an international alliance for an Arab-Israeli peace that would mobilise the intellectual and popular forces within the countries that are party to the conflict and in Europe, America and the Third World, with the aim of pushing the settlement process toward a just and comprehensive peace, thereby transcending the realm of purely governmental concern.

One must note that many of the people who have attacked the Copenhagen Declaration have themselves personally taken part in dialogues with Israeli intellectuals — albeit behind closed doors — on numerous occasions in various Western capitals. This indicates a glaring discrepancy between word and deed. While in their statements they condemn dialogue as a form of normalisation, they have in fact met frequently through channels which, even by their standards, would correspond to their own definition of normalisation.

Salaheddin Hafez has participated in at least two seminars, according to a recent survey undertaken by some research centres. These seminars, which included a number of Israeli participants, were held in Italy and Spain. Nevertheless, in his articles and speeches, Hafez described the Copenhagen Declaration as part of the process of normalisation with Israel.

Rifaat El-Said, the secretary-general of Al-Tagammu Party, stated, in a televised debate on the International Alliance for Peace, that to engage in dialogue with Israeli intellectuals constitutes a step toward normal relations with Israel. Therefore, he affirmed, he would not participate in any seminars with Israelis. When I reminded him that he had in fact met an Israeli scholar studying the history of the Egyptian left and the Arab-Israeli conflict, El-Said replied that he had not met this scholar secretly, but rather openly, at the headquarters of his party.

Islamist and pan-Arab nationalist writers, politicians and intellectuals denied reports to the effect that they participated in dialogues with Israeli intellectuals. The wording of their denial is most interesting: they participated in these seminars, they admitted, but did not speak to the Israeli participants.

The organisers of any such seminar or conference in a European or American city would naturally have specified the agenda beforehand; the list of the guests and their nationalities would be distributed to the participants. Imagine a gathering in which those who have agreed to attend do not mention the very issues which they have been expressly invited to discuss. Is it reasonable to accept that there was no intellectual exchange between Arabs and Israelis in the seminar titled "Exploring the facts of the Arab-Israeli conflict", held in Berlin in 1991 as Fahmi Howeidi claims (*Al-Ahram*, 25 March 1997)?

Two other instances relate to this issue, although they are of a slightly different nature because their protagonists belong to the category I referred to in a previous article as the "yes-no" school whose adherents appear to advocate an issue and to retract their support in the same breath.

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed was described by a French newspaper — *Libération* if I am not mistaken — as "one of the Arab writers who engaged in the earliest and most frequent dialogues with his Israeli colleagues". Initially, Sid-Ahmed vehemently denounced the Copenhagen Declaration, even though he had personally attended some of the initial meetings that were held in 1995. The dialogues, he said, would lead to normalisation which "the vast majority of Arab intellectuals reject."

He soon realised, however, that he was condemning himself first of all, given his ten years of first-hand experience in meetings with Israeli intellectuals. Suddenly, therefore, he shifted tack. Dialogue was no longer normalisation, but, he added; the problem now lies in how we conduct such a dialogue, necessary in order to elucidate diverse visions of a just and comprehensive peace, *without permitting ourselves to* slide into normalisation. Sid-Ahmed has yet to provide an answer to this conundrum.

Ahmed Hamroush was the first Egyptian and Arab intellectual ever to speak to Israeli intellectuals and politicians. He also met with leaders of the World Jewish Organisation following the Arab defeat in June 1967. In three articles, two of which appeared in the London-based *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper and the third of which appeared in *Rose Al-Youssef* magazine, Hamroush vented his full wrath. Then we learned that he was one of the first people to be contacted by Ali El-Shalaqani to discuss the Copenhagen initiative. According to Al-Shalaqani, Hamroush was an enthusiastic supporter of the Copenhagen initiative and the International Alliance for an Arab-Israeli Peace. Indeed, he had signed the draft declaration. When these two facts came to light, Hamroush declared that dialogue between Arab and Israeli intellectuals did not constitute normalisation.

Has dialogue become imperative and, if so, in what way? Is it a reflection of new realities that have emerged in the course of this conflict, or were these dialogues some sort of clever trap? Last but not least, will any specific benefit come from dialogue in terms of enlightening political thought and laying the groundwork for a difficult, complex and perhaps painful peace? Or will it merely serve "normalisation", directly or indirectly, and consequently strengthen Israel's hand against the Arabs?

Dialogue becomes particularly urgent when regional and international circumstances are propitious for preparing joint action and mobilising new cultural energies. The few individuals capable of carrying out this task have the historical perception that enables them to conceive a new and dynamic vision with regard to peace. The energies they mobilise will be able to push for peace from within. They are also in a position to oppose policies of occupation and repression, or the forces of racism and extremism that are so inimical to change and a truly just peace.

History — at least, 20th-century history — is testimony to the efficacy of such grassroots cultural movements in bringing about just resolutions to major conflicts, as Algeria, South Africa and Vietnam show.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has reached a certain historical juncture following decades of systematic warfare and Palestinian resistance, during which neither side managed to eliminate the other. Now, a peaceful political settlement has become the central objective of both conflicting parties. Today, the majority of Israelis oppose the Likud government and Netanyahu. During the electoral campaign and at the polls, they supported his hard-line stance against the Arabs and voted for him on the basis of his promise to slow or even halt the peace process, emphasising Israeli security concerns. The past year, however, has demonstrated to most Israelis that it is impossible to separate "security" from "the peace process."

Israelis are neither able nor willing to continue their lives in a perpetual state of military mobilisation. At the same time, Israeli society, in the words of a Knesset member representing the Labour Party, is disintegrating into conflicting ethnic groups with divergent interests, groups of settlers and religious extremists whose increasing use of violence and ideological intimidation jeopardises modern Israeli civil society and threatens to isolate it further from the region and the contemporary world.

Clearly, the monolithic, immutable "enemy" is no longer our true "enemy". There are those who support a just peace. It is not in our interests, if we seek a just and comprehensive peace, to boycott them and refuse to communicate. Unfortunately, however, Arabs remain incapable of anything — war, settlement, peace, revolution, reform, solidarity with the Palestinian people alone or with the forces of peace inside Israel. All they can do is sit on the sidelines and boo or cheer. Only after someone brings them their rights on a platter will they begin to talk and take action.



No 'heavy', no hero

In much the same way that history is shaped by heroes, so it is by fools. During his trip to Washington, Netanyahu was eager to reveal to Clinton his commitment to peace. In what the US president described as "frank and lengthy talks," Netanyahu pointed out that Israel could not be pressured into halting its settlement construction both in and around Jerusalem and the West Bank. Palestinian "extortion" efforts, he continued, would not be rewarded by Israeli compliance. In Washington last week, there were no heroes visiting the White House.

For Netanyahu, security has been the goal since he took office last year. However, what at first seemed to be an emphasis on securing the future of his country has rapidly become a bid to secure his post and his place in history. The hardline elements in Israel are, quite simply, running the show. Unfortunately, it is also these same extremists who are playing house on lands whose status has yet to be determined. And, it is also the right-wingers who keep instigating the violence that has, several days ago, left one Palestinian murdered and several others injured in clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian protesters after a Jewish settler murdered a Palestinian.

Yet, Israel maintains it is committed to peace, but only if its security can be guaranteed. Would this security, however, not be the first outcome of concluding a just and comprehensive peace? Netanyahu has chosen to ignore this point, opting instead to hurl about baseless, inflammatory rhetoric and accusations about the Palestinian leadership. And, as he asserts that there will be no divided Jerusalem, no Palestinian state and no return to pre-1967 borders, in the same breath he calls on Arafat to accelerate the pace of the final status negotiations.

But lest anyone think that Netanyahu is the "heavy" in this matter, it must be noted that Israel has complied with the Oslo agreements — in the same way that it has embraced the land-for-peace deal and supported the rights of Palestinians.

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Turn of the screw

Two recent terrorist attacks in Upper Egypt indicate that Islamist violence is heading in new directions, with unpredictable results for the future, writes Diaa Rashwan

Three months after the attack on the Orthodox church in Abu Qurqas in the Governorate of El-Minya, which claimed 13 Christian casualties, the village of Naga Hamadi in the Governorate of Qena was also attacked. Again, the number of people killed was 13, while many others were injured. Both attacks appear to indicate a new and worrying development in patterns of Islamist violence.

Despite differences in the nature, site, and targeted persons in each of the two attacks, there are important shared elements. Both targetted Christian places of worship, and by extension members of the Christian denomination. The Abu Qurqas attack was the first time that extremists had fired within the sanctuary of a Christian church. What is more, the attack targetted a weekly youth meeting, meaning that most of the victims were young people. In the second attack, extremists opened fire randomly in the market place of the village of Naga Hamadi, the majority of whose inhabitants are Christian. Although four Muslims were among the victims of the attack, the principal target were Christians and the incidental death of Muslims was due only to the method of executing the attack — indiscriminate machine gunfire — and the place in which it happened — a crowded marketplace.

Similarities between the two attacks suggest that they were the work of the same group. In both instances the assailants wore the uniforms of the Special Police Counter-Terrorism Squad, a disguise that facilitated the free movement of the perpetrators before the attack and their subsequent escape.

In recent years the presence of the Special Police Squad in Upper Egypt has become a common sight, one that evokes a certain amount of fear and caution, which goes some way towards explaining the absence of any resistance or suspicion on the part of local inhabitants. The second similarity concerns the smaller attacks that followed both the main onslaughts. After the attack on the church, three Christians were killed in a nearby field, while the marketplace assault was followed by shots being fired at a passing train which killed one woman and injured others. Both of the later attacks appear to have been intended to divert the attention of the security forces, dissipate their efforts and spread confusion.

The two governorates in which the attacks occurred both have a high percentage of Christian inhabitants and share high concentrations of the most violent Islamist groups, particularly Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya. Yet the history of sectarian violence in the two governorates displays a marked variance. El-Minya has experienced friction between Muslims, Islamists and Copts for several years now while the Governorate of Qena, apart from a few minor incidents, has been largely trouble free.

Both the similarities and differences in the two attacks contain important implications for the future direction of Islamist violence and sectarian strife in Egypt. Certainly, the fact that a Christian place of worship has been attacked is likely to have serious ramifications. That people were murdered within a church cannot but fail to traumatise the Christian population of Upper Egypt. Given the social customs of the region, calls for revenge, while regrettable, are hardly unexpected. And despite calls for calm, from both within the church and from government officials, the attack has created an atmosphere in which tension, and the possibility of further irresponsible acts, is enhanced.

The random nature of the second attack further contributes to tensions, and has aroused many fears concerning the future pattern of extremist violence. The transfer of sectarian violence for the first time, and on such a large and bloody scale, to the Governorate of Qena, will do little to reassure the Christian population of areas that, until hitherto, had been relatively trouble free.

In the past, extremist attacks have generally been preceded by attempts to legitimate the action, however arbitrarily, with reference to *shari'a*. So, the question arises, have the extremists who committed these acts attempted to justify, within such terms of reference, murder within the sanctuary of a church, or indiscriminate open fire on crowds in a marketplace?

If such justifications have indeed been made, which seems likely — before now, the absence of any justification within *shari'a* for any given act had rendered that act impermissible for the extremists — then the two attacks signify a decisive turning point in the direction of Islamist and sectarian violence in Egypt, opening the door for Islamist groups to undertake operations that will have potentially grave consequences for Egypt's political and social structures.

Within the same context it is important to note that both incidents occurred against the backdrop of heavy media reporting on divisions within Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, one of the largest extremist groups. Following the attack in Abu Qurqas, several contradictory statements were issued by the splintered leadership of this group, with some claiming responsibility for the attack while others denied any involvement. Several sources spoke of dissent within the group, particularly between the internal leadership of Al-Gama'a and its leadership abroad. Such sources tended to place responsibility for the attack on the shoulders of the group's leaders abroad.

That the attack on Naga Hamadi took place just as these reports of discord were emerging serves to reinforce the impression that something strange is happening within the ranks of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya.

While conflicting claims and denials of responsibility might confuse the picture, the method and location of the attacks leave little doubt that they were, indeed, the work of members of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya. And if this does, in fact, prove to be the case, then it seems likely that recent dissension within the group is linked to the attempts to justify the nature of the two attacks with reference to *shari'a*.

Whatever the nature of the breach within the group may be, the fact that a second attack occurred at all is likely to have grave implications for the future of Islamic violence in Egypt.

The writer is managing editor of The State of Religion in Egypt Report, *issued by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.*

Countdown to a new millennium

A thousand days separated last Sunday from the advent of *the third millennium.* Mohamed Sid-Ahmed comments

With exactly one thousand days separating us from the year 2000 last Sunday, the countdown to the third millennium has begun in earnest. One would be entitled to hope that its advent will not provoke the same degree of consternation and fear as that aroused on the eve of the second millennium, which, coming as it did at the worst moment of Europe's Dark Ages, was seen as marking the end of the world. After all, we are talking of two entirely different historical contexts. In the first, ignorance and superstition reigned supreme; today, we are living in an age of information, knowledge and science which, a thousand years ago, had its counterpart not in the Christian but in the Muslim world. Moreover, the year 1000 had no special significance for the Muslims, whose calendar did not begin with what was believed to be the date of the birth of Christ.

However, fear of Armageddon is still very much with us on the eve of the third millennium. Only a few years ago, the spectre of thermonuclear war haunted a world caught in the grip of a deadly arms race. We are now told that the end of the Cold War, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall, has put an end to the conflict of ideologies and ushered in a new era which has been described by Francis Fukuyama as the 'end of history'. Other American scholars are unwilling to go that far. For example Samuel P Huntington has come up with his now famous theory that a clash of civilisations has replaced the conflict between ideologies.

In the event, the end of the second millennium coincides with the end of a specific form of global conflict between two blocs of states with antipodal ideologies, for whom peaceful coexistence was only tactical and a resolution of the conflict conceivable only in terms of the elimination of one by the other, ideologically if not physically. This global game was known as the bipolar world order, and a key question at this juncture is whether the end of the second millennium will witness an end to bipolarity or its perpetuation in other forms.

There are good reasons to believe that bipolarity will continue at the global level, if not in the form of an East-West confrontation then in the form of a North-South/rich-poor confrontation, or as a growing polarisation between those whose frame of reference lies in the future and those for whom it lies in the past, as is the case of fundamentalist schools of thinking. At the institutional level, however, the most salient form of bipolarity today is between the advocates of a unipolar world order on the one hand and those of a multipolar order on the other. The point of contention between them: will the United States be the key actor in shaping the twenty-first century, or can we expect to see a multipolar game which, by ensuring a measure of democratisation in the world system, would pave the way towards a more equitable post-bipolar world order.

What is important in the coming one thousand days is not how the first decades of the next millennium will actually unfold, but how our present perceptions of those decades are likely to develop. We are in fact using an arbitrary date, the year 2000, as an opportunity to launch a debate on the fundamental problems of our time — a time which has witnessed not only the breakdown of 'social engineering' experiments like 'scientific socialism', but also the rise of new types of 'engineering' having little to do with structure and architecture, such as genetic engineering, whose ground-breaking cloning of Dolly the sheep from a single adult cell recently electrified the world, and 'ecological engineering', which aims at changing the features of the environment to adapt them to modern man's needs, and compensate for the damage he has done to the ecosystem.

That is not to say that social engineering is nothing more than a utopian dream that will never materialise, only that it often proceeded from the false assumption that everything could be neatly predicted. Now that we know history to be neither linear nor purely deterministic, we need to re-think the whole notion of planning for the future. For planning to become more credible and hence more effective, it must take such new scientific theories into account as the Complexity Theory and Chaos Theory, which call into question many of the certainties we once took for granted, and which introduce in the unfolding of events the notions of randomness and uncertainty as inbuilt ingredients, and not merely as the expression of subjective ignorance.

To paraphrase the ancient Chinese curse, we are living in interesting times. The collapse of many ideological dogmas has opened the door to fresh thinking, which is not limited only to present realities, but extends to the very meaning of life itself. Central to the concerns of many intellectuals today, the search for new dimensions to the meaning of life manifests itself in different ways. One of the strangest was last month's mass suicide of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult in southern California, who timed their deaths to coincide with the approach of Comet Hale-Bopp on the eve of a new millennium. Man's discovery that he is not at the centre of the universe nor necessarily the most superior of all beings has unleashed elements of instability, both material and psychic, which have clouded the meaning of life.

Of course, no debate on the future in this part of the world can avoid mentioning the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially in view of the current deterioration in the peace process. With Netanyahu remaining in office until the end of the century, and as long as Clinton remains in the White House, it can safely be assumed that a fundamental breakthrough towards a just and lasting Middle East peace is highly unlikely. It should also be remembered that the final phase of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is meant to address issues that are immeasurably more difficult than any addressed so far, including Jerusalem, borders, water, Israeli settlements, Palestinian statehood and Palestinians' right of return.

It could be argued that the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot continue indefinitely in a world where interdependence between states and interpenetration between peoples will eventually defeat any attempts to sustain all-out polarisation and confrontation. But it could also be argued that the shrinking of the planet into a global village can make the other appear so close as to be encroaching on one's patrimony, i.e. as an aggressor. Thus in a world marked by uncertainty, surprises are always possible. But whatever the difficulties facing any attempt at predicting the future, singular dates such as the beginning of a millennium, however arbitrary, offer a unique opportunity to assess where things stand and try and determine the direction they are likely to take.

Not just cellular

By Naguib Mahfouz

Cloning is neither good or bad; it is a new scientific experiment, and one must not stand in the way of scientific research. History bears testimony to this imperative: every time mankind attempted to block scientific progress it proved a mistake, from Galileo to the present.

Fear of progress is a moral, not a scientific phenomenon. The annihilation of the population of Nagasaki and Hiroshima was a moral issue, unrelated to the scientific nature of the atom. The atom is invaluable in science, in medicine and in agriculture; progress must not be hindered just because humans are morally deviant. It is up to us to instruct mankind.

Cloning is not simply a matter of cells. If one were to clone an individual from Hitler's cells, that would not necessarily result in a replay of World War II. The environment clearly plays a role. If a Hitler was created today in Germany, with all Hitler's characteristics, he might become an artist and depict the world of his dreams; instead of destroying the world, he might destroy realism. Human beings are conditioned by their environment, not just by their DNA. Hitler's choices were not only the result of innate characteristics, but were also conditioned by the Versailles Treaty and a humiliated Germany which was bound to rise and rebel.

It is said that tampering with genetics is against the divine laws ordained by God. Taking an artery from a man's leg and inserting it into his heart is also against divine injunctions, as is the implantation of an animal's liver in a human body. So, too, is exploring the depths of the oceans.

God gave man a brain and empowered him to achieve all these things as a service to humanity and progress, so we must not refuse the challenge.

Based on an interview with Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Last straw

Al-Shaab: "Gentlemen, what are you waiting for to confront Israel's aggression? Are you waiting for Netanyahu to save you by halting the building of the Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement? Are you waiting for him to declare the discovery of Jewish graves in the area, thus halting the bulldozers? And if he does that, will you then meet him again and talk about progress in the peace process? The Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement is the last straw; a symbol of Arab humiliation."
(Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 1 April)

Al-Ahali: "In the eyes of the US administration, Netanyahu has every right to violate the peace process, to replace the land-for-peace formula with his own peace-for-peace concept, which he put into effect by building new settlements. Washington and Tel Aviv are cooperating to deprive the Palestinians of the fruits of world support by labelling every objection to US-Israeli schemes terrorism! Can peace thrive in such a framework? And is it worthwhile to make efforts to resume the peace process?"
(Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, 2 April)

Al-Akhbar: "The American friend is not prepared to be an honest broker. After all that has happened, Arafat is required to stop the violence without getting anything in return. No pledge of any sort is demanded of the other side. Arafat is required to remain silent and to accept a *fait accompli* dictated by Israel according to the whims of a conceited man who has no previous experience of politics."
(Mahmoud Abdel-Moneim, 3 April)

Al-Ahram: "The Israeli reaction to the Arab League resolutions — calling for a halt of normalisation with Israel until it changes its position on peace — did not come as a surprise to me or to any other observer, considering the way Netanyahu and his extremist government distort facts. The reaction conforms to the Israeli pattern of blaming the Arabs, and Egypt in particular, for everything. The peace process is on the brink of disaster thanks to the misguided policies of Netanyahu and his government."
(Ibrahim Nafie, 4 April)

Al-Gomhuria: "The Madrid and Oslo agreements have brought us little more than bulldozers in Jerusalem, two vetoes in the Security Council and the occupation authority's bullets in the Occupied Territories. The Israeli defence minister is in Washington to negotiate a fresh consignment of advanced US helicopters, as though two US vetoes were not enough!"
(Kamel Zoheiri, 5 April)

Al-Wafd: "The angry Israeli reaction to the Arab League recommendations is not based on facts. The Likud theatrics helped Israel hit two birds with one stone. On the one hand, the Arabs were led to believe that they have achieved something remarkable and unprecedented. On the other hand, Israel exploited the situation to get compensation for the damage done to it by what it saw as an Egyptian-led hostile campaign. And the compensation is being collected from the US ally."
(Sanaa El-Said, 6 April)

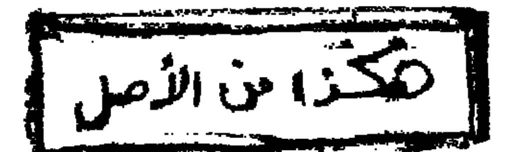
October: "Egypt wants peace. All the Arabs want peace. We said this over and over again and we know how to honour our pledges and agreements. But Netanyahu's provocation of the Palestinians and Arabs will turn them all into terrorists because terrorism is the weapon of those who have no other weapon. The Arabs must realise that they have weapons: the recognition of Israel as a state in the region; normalisation; security; stone-throwing children and the bitterness in the hearts of the grown-ups. All these are weapons. Netanyahu is gambling. He assumes that the Arabs are powerless and we tell him that he will lose his bet."
(Ragab El-Banna, 6 April)

Rose El-Youssef: "The speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, during a recent visit to China, discovered that the Chinese are different from the Americans! President Clinton, for his part, has not discovered that the Arabs are different from the Americans. He has yet to learn that religious beliefs are part and parcel of their being. Jebel Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem is not just a building plot for use in resolving a housing shortage. It represents an aggression against the very existence of the Arabs. Political and intelligence reports will not help Clinton see the situation for what it really is. He is taking the issue lightly and is thus responsible for the daily bloodshed between Arabs and Israelis. Clinton is linking his political fate to that of Netanyahu."
(Fathi Ghanem, 7 April)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



Binyamin Netanyahu and Bill Clinton, who met in Washington last Monday, seem on the surface to have very different features. Yet in depicting them both I found, surprisingly, that their faces are composed of the same elements, the spherical cheeks, the bottom-heavy jaw, the thick lips.



Close up

Salama A. Salama

No-go placebo

Once more, Netanyahu is trying to renege on international *commitments that the Oslo* agreements imposed on Israel by leaping over hurdles. Netanyahu has ignored previously accepted terms, and failed to fulfil specific pledges within predetermined time phases. His alleged purpose is to reach the final stage ahead of schedule, thus extricating the peace process from the current impasse and resolving problems all in one go.

The gradual implementation of the peace process in successive phases was originally an American-Israeli invention. Kissinger introduced it at the beginning of the peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt. It began with disengagement, then gradual withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. Each of the withdrawal phases was meant to be associated to some extent *with part of the normal*isation process.

This was based on the premise that gradual withdrawal would help build confidence between the parties. Each phase would contribute to resolving the potential problems of the next. Time would also heal wounds, *eliminate vindictive* feelings and ill-will, and contribute to the establishment of normal relations between the two sides. A step-by-step policy provides the opportunity for each party to test the other's good will, and the extent of mutual commitment to pledges undertaken.

This pragmatism, although it was regarded with scepticism at the time, brought about a peaceful settlement between Egypt and Israel. When the Oslo agreement was concluded, it was said, in the attempt to justify optimism regarding its outcome, that it was reminiscent of Camp David. Arafat defended the huge concessions that he made to the Israelis in the early stages of the agreement on the grounds that they were designed to build confidence between Palestinians and Israelis.

He had hoped that postponing the more difficult problems, like Jerusalem, refugees, and statehood, to final status negotiations would facilitate their resolution, particularly. He also banked on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from most of the Palestinian cities and territories, and hoped to win over opponents of the Oslo agreement.

When the Jewish extremist parties took office under Netanyahu's leadership, however, all the steps that had been taken in this direction were reversed. In Washington, Netanyahu demanded that the issues previously agreed upon in Oslo be placed on the table again, and new negotiations with the Palestinians organised. *All issues will be subject to* negotiation under constant American supervision. It is clear that Netanyahu's aim is to continue building settlements, jailing and torturing all Palestinian opposition, allegedly to protect Israeli security, and to brandish the constant menace of military *intervention, under the pre*text that the PNA might lose control, leading to an explosion of violence.

It goes without saying that such negotiations, held in an atmosphere devoid of good will, surrounded by suspicions on both sides, while the construction of settlements and the repression of the Palestinian people continue unabated, will not lead to any result. Following Madrid, Palestinian-Israeli talks under American sponsorship continued in Washington for 18 months without advancing by a single inch. This stalemate was resolved only by the Oslo agreement. The proof is that Netanyahu, who thinks he is more intelligent than anyone else, leaves the door ajar for the resumption of the Oslo agreement within a designated period, *in the event that* the new Camp David fails.

Netanyahu can take whatever ideas and proposals he likes to Washington. The US is responsible for peace, and for pressuring Israel to respect the international agreements it has signed. This responsibility places a burden on the US that may not easily be shrugged off. Nor will it be easy for the US administration to put Israel's prescription in an American vial, disguising it as an initiative formulated by President *Clinton. Confidence in* America itself has been so very badly shaken that it is now up to the US administration to search for new confidence-building procedures to bridge the gap with the Arabs.







Soapbox

A move from the centre

On Monday, Egypt witnessed the final phase of the electoral campaign in which local council representatives were chosen. All the political parties participated through their representatives. *Only the Wafd boycotted the elections.*

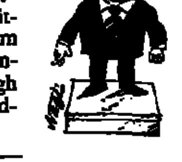
The local or provincial elections are often the forerunners of new trends, and provide accurate indicators of the position of political forces and their true weight with the public, as the victory of the Rafah Party in Turkey shows.

The local elections in France, in which the Front National won important seats in a number of French cities, also indicated growing *national chauvinist* and *isolationist* trends.

In Egypt, local elections are managed on the basis of a system introduced in the early sixties. It was modified many times to bring greater efficiency to the local administrative force, and hence a greater capability to serve public interests in the provinces.

Despite the failure of the local administration system to fulfil its role of comprehensive local governance, this is an important step towards decentralisation. By vesting the provincial authority with more competence, a balance will emerge between the provincial leadership, appointed by the central authority, and the elected council leaders.

The local administration system has chosen a position halfway between the decentralised form of government and the fully centralised type applied in several Third World countries. We are witnessing an important move away from centralisation, while ensuring the consistency of provincial policy through appointment of the provincial leadership by the central authority.



Fathi Abdel-Fattah

This week's speaker is a social scientist and a senior journalist with Al-Gomhouriya *newspaper.*

Bulldozers, bullets and blarney

Willpower, stones and suicide bombers are the Palestinians' only weapons in a game with no rules and no referee, writes **Amin Hewedy**

To realise its political and expansionist objectives, the Netanyahu government has consistently applied an "indirect approach strategy". In his book *A Place Under the Sun*, Netanyahu spells out his profound belief in this strategy. For him, Israel has full rights to everything — land, security and peace — and thus denies the same rights of land, security and peace to others. Israel has the right to impose its own terms to guarantee its absolute security, ignoring the right of others to terms ensuring their own security. Israel imposes its peace and delineates its borders by the sword, because it believes that Arabs can only understand the language of force. While the Arabs *may object loudly to Israel's measures, they end up by* accepting what they had rejected, forgetting the cause of the dispute and resuming their relations with Israel. In other words, the Arabs end up accepting the new facts on the ground, submitting to force.

Netanyahu's current strategy may be summarised as follows:

Netanyahu claims that what the Arabs have already obtained is enough. Israel has relinquished parts of Sinai, and made several compromises here and there, which are all the Arabs will get. Sinai is an unpopulated region, free of heavy weapons by virtue of agreements concluded between Egypt and Israel. Even if lighter weapons are *secretly smuggled into Sinai, they pose no threat to Israel* in view of their short range. Light weapons, however, in the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights can be a real threat to Israel's security because targets in Israel fall within their range of the weapons.

Israel considers that it has implemented Security Council Resolution 242. By pulling out of Sinai it claims that it has "withdrawn from occupied territory". The resolution calls on the parties to the conflict to refrain from statements encouraging war or perpetuating the state of war, *and instead to recognise the sovereignty, territorial* integrity and political independence of all the states in the region, within recognised borders, including those of Israel's Arab neighbours. The resolution calls on the Arab states to reciprocate by recognising the sovereignty of Israel. Therefore, for Netanyahu, the claims reiterated by Arabs and their allies that Israel has failed to honour its commitments of withdrawal, are gross distortions of reality. He alleges that withdrawal should succeed, rather than precede, the signing of peace agreements with the Arabs. Arthur Goldberg, one of the architects of Resolution 242, admitted the deliberate deletion of the definite article "the" and "all" qualifying Israeli withdrawal from *"occupied land" in a bid to* compel the parties to negotiate the specificities of withdrawal (from "which" occupied lands, and how far?), in compliance with the resolution.

In order to implement its plan, Israel creates one problem after another. Netanyahu claimed that the Hebron agreement signed by Peres required further long and tedious negotiations before it could be implemented. Even after the agreement was signed, it is impossible to implement, since Netanyahu refuses to execute 30 of the terms previously accepted. He opened the passage running under Al-Aqsa Mosque to cover up his reluctance to implement the Hebron agreement. When the Arabs took up the issue of the passage, he created a new problem by *initiating ground work for the settlement in East Je*rusalem under the protection of the US veto. Creating a new problem before solving the preceding one has been a consistent pattern in Netanyahu's policy. He manifests willingness to sign any agreement, while in his heart he is determined to breach it regardless of Arab reactions or world condemnation.

Procrastinating to win time for Sharon, minister of infrastructure, to create geographical and demographic changes on the ground has been Netanyahu's ongoing policy. He visits world leaders and tours the major capitals to quieten global outrage; once calm returns, he creates new problems to sow new seeds of despair in the *hearts of Arabs and foments renewed insecurity in the re*gion.

On the other hand, the Arabs seem to be moving at random, without plan, strategy, or defined purpose. They are still issuing resolutions condemning Israel's actions. They know that international fora can only produce resolutions with little effect on the ground, and that the Security Council will not budge from its present deadlock since even these resolutions are perennially blocked by the US veto. The Security Council has become a shelter *for aggression, and no longer a haven for victims of op*pression and aggression.

The rules of the game played by the Israelis have changed with the change in government. The Labour Party is a hybrid bird with a hawk's body and a dove's head, while the Likud is a bird with a dove's body and a hawk's head. The two teams, the Arab and the Israeli, are both determined to win. The Arab team is playing the game by the same old rules, on the defensive rather than the offensive, and hence usually fails to score. The Americans are no longer playing as referee, but have already put on the Likud team's colours; they accept every Likud violation of the rules without a word.

Some of the new weapons introduced into the conflict, such as bulldozers, may be as decisive as bullets in deciding the outcome of the battle. The terms of agreements intended to free land under occupation have now been obstructed. The land is not being returned to its owners; instead, the geographic and demographic characteristics of the land itself are being changed. The bulldozers are levelling Jebel Abu Ghneim so that houses may be built for more Jews from abroad, while the rightful owners of the land are a stone's throw away, without a shelter.

The US veto, an old weapon, is being put to a new use. Never before has this right granted to the five great powers *been used twice in a few days. The veto has become* another weapon on the battlefield, an artillery barrage in a strategy to protect the invaders as they advance with their bulldozers to occupy land which belongs to others.

Once again, stone-throwing, an old weapon in a battle against nearby targets, has been introduced as a decisive factor in the battle. The Palestinians have renewed this device to deter the assaults they suffer day after day under the protection of the US veto and silence from the Arab world, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf. They could have *thrown bombs, or used other* more deadly weapons, but they did not wish to escalate the violence.

Human bombs are another weapon in the battle. Men who strap explosives to their own bodies become both killers and victims. Examples are the four human bombs which preceded the Qana massacre, which in turn led to the fall of Peres, and the human bomb which exploded in a café in Tel Aviv more recently. These bombs are locally produced, and exclusively used by the Arabs. The Israelis, greedy for the land of others, would never conceive of such a horrible weapon, but the Hizbullah arsenal is well stocked. Human bombs never miss their *target. They are close to their target, and their de*termination is unflinching. A human bomb compelled *the Sixth Fleet to flee Beirut* after a young woman drove a truck loaded with explosives into the US marine headquarters. She died in the blast, and the marines pulled out of Beirut for good.

Willpower is another weapon which must not be underestimated. While Netanyahu may claim that there is no place for the Palestinians between "the river and the sea" and insist that "undivided Jerusalem" will be the eternal *capital of Israel, so do the Palestinians insist that the* State of Palestine will have East Jerusalem as its capital before the end of the century. In his book, Netanyahu refers to an incident which seems to fill him with anxiety. He tells of the elderly Palestinian he met on one of his visits to a refugee camp in Gaza. He asked the old Palestinian about his native town, and the old man said it was Al-Majdal. Netanyahu corrected him, explaining that its name is now the settlement of Ashkalon. "No," said the Palestinian, "it is Al-Majdal." Netanyahu persued the dialogue further: "Where do your children come from?" The reply: "From Al-Majdal, as do my grandchildren. We will return to Al-Majdal when peace reigns," to which Netanyahu returned: "Maybe for a visit?" But with determination in his eyes, the Palestinian said: "We will return to Al-Majdal, and you will return to Poland!"

The battlefield, however, is also littered with useless weapons. Statements made by various organisations such as the Jerusalem Committee or the Organisation of the Islamic Conference are only words on paper, with no real force on the ground.

In this overview of the protagonists' arsenal, we should add a new type of weapon to the conventional, the conventional-plus and the nuclear. This new type, which I call the conventional-minus, comprises bulldozers, human bombs, Molotov cocktails and stones. State*ments or verbal condemnations are excluded from the* range of effective weapons. How can we discredit a victim trying to retrieve his rights if he resorts to stone-throwing, suicide bombings, or willpower? How can we call him a terrorist while we allow his assailant to use bulldozers under the protection of the US veto, to torture civilians, rob them of their water and usurp their land? The US, supposedly an honest broker, has identified itself with the Likud; as a result, there are now no rules and no arbitrator.

I believe the international community must hold an international meeting in Geneva to ban the bulldozers in Jerusalem. The meeting should also restrict the use of the veto. *Such a meeting takes precedence over meetings* which ban the production and use of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction. For our region, the bulldozers are far more dangerous. They are intended to bring about geographic and demographic changes, so that we will find ourselves negotiating issues which have no existence in actual fact. The bulldozers, protected by the US veto, are drawing a new map and delineating new borders. The maps we inherited from our fathers will some day be mere sketches which are completely di*vorced from reality on the ground.*

The writer is a former minister of defence and former head of the General Intelligence Service.

Whose present will it be?

Yesterday's abundance, and all tomorrow's promises: **Hassan Hanafi** enters a time warp

Philosophical concepts are not pure abstractions. They emanate from vital, concrete realities; in turn, they in*form* these realities and profoundly affect how human beings relate to the realm of reality. They accumulate in the collective consciousness and come to define the contours of the collective personality, the form of national culture and the dynamism of entire populations.

Two concepts central to human society are time and alienation. Both are deeply rooted in both Western and Arab thought. *While contemporary constructions of these* concepts have informed modern existentialism, among other philosophies, it is also clear that they influenced Arab-Islamic thought. For instance, one *hadith* (prophetic saying) holds that God created time as a cycle from which emanate the years, months and days. The Prophet also said that when Islam was first revealed, it was alien to the people and will become alien again, but that those who remain faithful, though estranged, will be blessed. To the philosopher Al-Dilji, alienation was the equivalent *of a sea voyage:* those aboard the craft lived in a context different from the time and the world they had left behind when they embarked.

The perception of time in the Arab consciousness may well be at the heart of our current political crisis. Time is the cornerstone of historical consciousness; historical consciousness informs political awareness. In the Arab *consciousness, time is projected backward, to a past uto*pia where reality and the ideal were one. Time, however, created a rift between the two, between the ideal, located in a distant past, and the agony of the present. This perception is the cause of an unhealthy escapism, a tendency to find solace in the glory of the past and thereby to compensate for the failures of the present. It is far easier to reminisce than it is to *analyse the causes of the present* crisis. The opiate of a dream is far more appealing than the pain involved in coming to terms with the reality of life today.

Yet similar tendencies are clear in perceptions of the future. The distant future is a ready refuge from the miseries so close at hand. Millenarian optimism is a comforting release from the harsh, inescapable truth of the present.

Suspended between the two golden ages, the Arabs refuse to let the present in. This mentality is equally characteristic of Islamists, Arab nationalists, liberals and Marxists. The Islamist discourse, behind its condemnation of present-day realities, yearns to return to the age of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, after which history entered its inexorable decline. Our distant ancestors, who established and preserved the Muslim heritage, are blessed, while their descendants, who have forgotten the straight path, are condemned to misery. Beyond the blessed past, there remains the blissful future: life after death for martyrs in the name of God. The eternal happiness of the soul is preferable to ephemeral, worldly happiness. With immortality so close at hand, *why fear the present? The past and future have special* resonance, not only in Islamist discourse, but in ordinary Friday sermons, which have become weekly sedatives.

Arab nationalists, too, are infected by this strange nostalgia. To them, the golden era is symbolised by Egyptian-Syrian unity: Nasser remains its spiritual leader and Sati' Al-Husrai, Michel Aflaq, Nadim Al-Bitar and Salah *Al-Bitar its philosophical luminaries.* This was the time when the pan-Arab discourse was full of hope for liberty, socialism and unity. Comprehensive national liberation transcended the boundaries of the nation-state to challenge Western military alliances. Nasser's speeches still echo in our ears, Abdel-Halim Hafez's patriotic songs are on the radio, and the film *Nasser '56*, breaking all box office records, transports audiences back in time to a happier past. At the same time, Nasserists congratulate each other: the past is not dead, the dreams it represented will *bear fruit in the future.* The nation-state has failed to offer a successful alternative to Arab unity. After all, in the name of the nation-state, the second Gulf War erupted and Egypt, then Jordan, signed peace treaties with Israel, signaling the beginning of the mad scramble to reach agreements with Israel as if it held the key to the political security of their regimes, military investments, *and capitalist enterprises. Meanwhile, lulled by the rhet*oric of Arab unity, no one seeks the source of the present crisis.

Liberals are equally prone to finding their panacea in a return to the past. Gone are the days of scholarly innovation, multi-party systems, constitutional politics, and civic associations which prevailed in Egypt and the Arab world before the wave of popularist revolutions. Gone are the days when Abbas El-Aqqad could stand up in parliament and shout that he could "smash the biggest head in the country", the days when Ahmed Hussein could write, below a picture of destitute people in the street, "Oh Master, these are your subjects." Even Great *Britain, much as it would have liked to,* could not change the press law and censor the national newspapers.

The first parliaments of Egypt and Syria marked the dawn of the "liberal age" — the Arab renaissance, an unprecedented efflorescence of philosophical and literary activity. The nascent Arab press brandished new slogans: freedom of thought and resistance to colonial oppression. *Liberal discourse* turned eastward: there was no difference between the charisma of Saad Zaghloul and that of Mahatma Gandhi. Back to the liberal age, back to the de*fence* of civic freedoms, political pluralism, free elections and human rights. Back to the universals: liberalism, the heritage of all mankind, is for all peoples at all times.

In spite of the fact that Marxist rhetoric has lost its edge since the collapse of the socialist order, it still has its loyal adherents, keen to remind us that socialism put an end to czarist Russia, established socialist parties in Eastern Europe, withstood the Nazi expansion to the east and backed the national liberation movements and development of Third World peoples. The dreams of Lenin, Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara are still a source of inspiration for the older generation of Marxists as well as many younger people.

As long as international capitalism continues on its rapacious course, traditional Marxist literature remains the main source for the renovation of 20th-century Marxisms. *Hope springs eternal* with the return to power of the East European Marxist parties in free, democratic elections. People have learned that the past, though tinged with bitterness, is preferable to the encroachment of Western capitalism and the international market economy. If liberties were suspended in the past in the name of bread for all, the restoration of liberties has not put bread on people's *tables. Poverty has only become more* severe since the former socialist countries' conversion to a market economy. But Marxists continue to promise salvation, if only the past is restored at some point in the future. As for the present, it has its own inscrutable language and logic.

From all perspectives, therefore, the crisis of contemporary Arab consciousness is alienation from the present time. The present is simply the point from which we move back in time, to the radiant past, or forward, to the promise of *fulfilment* in the future. Islamists, Arab nationalists, Marxists and liberals all have their golden age. How enticing it is to depart an *unforgivably bleak present, to forget our need for* bread and freedom, and to dream of yesterday's abundance, and tomorrow's celebrations.

If the Arabs were to face the present, however, they would find numerous challenges. How can we understand the present? What is the precise nature of the current historical conjuncture? How do we contend with an omnipresent past that often prevents us from seeing the future clearly? History presents an obstacle if all we see is the legacy of power, obedience, acquiescence, tradition and repetition. On the other hand, it can provide an impetus toward progress if we regard it as the legacy of a people, if we can trace the pursuit of the common good, the quest for justice and the evolution of popular participation.

Similarly, visions for the future are encumbrances if they are merely hand-me-down copies of past in*novations or other people's models. But if they comprise* an active dynamic, one which allows for diverse contributions, strikes a balance with the course of history, and operates from the centre and not from the peripheries, they too can provide an impetus toward progress.

The Arab consciousness has another challenge before it *as it contends with the present. Whose present is it?* That of the elite or that of the masses? The minority or the majority? Exclusion, violence and fanaticism, or reform, dialogue and unity? The present is a statistical reality, and awareness of the present involves knowledge of where we stand.

The Islamists believe we have yet to carry out Islamic reforms. The Arab nationalists tell us that pan-Arab unification is not yet complete. To the liberals, the Arab renaissance that blossomed at the turn of the century has *only suffered a few setbacks.* And Marxist rhetoric continues to reiterate the chorus of revolution, social progress and the victory of science despite the collapse of the socialist order and the supremacy of the market economy. All three, as different as they are, are united by their condemnation of the times in which we live, their desire to revise history and their propensity to absolute nihilism. So comprehensive is our rejection of the present that we are unable to comprehend, or to act. It would do us well to remember the injunction "Do not *curse time, for God is time." We are the greatest flaw of* our time.

The writer is a professor of philosophy at Cairo University.



photo: Sherif Sonbol

AN EVENING WITH THE BOLSHOI: For almost three decades Yuri Grigorovich's spectacular choreography, after Petipa, for *The Nutcracker* has delighted audiences around the world. Last week the production was staged in Cairo once again, while next week the *Bolshoi will present that other perennial favourite, Swan Lake*, on the main stage of Cairo Opera House. For full details, see *Listings*

No devils tonight

David Blake on revelations and ascensions

When, perhaps two years ago now, Sherif Mohieddin and his new orchestra the Akhenaten gave concerts of Handel's complete *concerti grossi*, Cairo was presented with the best performed music since the Opera House opened. The night of 4 April was a similar occasion, with the same orchestra giving a wonderful performance of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, conducted by Dominique Rouits. Currently he is the conductor of Budapest's Bartok Festival, and a resident professor at the Ecole Normale in Paris. He has worked with Boulez, and this concert with the Akhenaten gave Cairo a taste of his quality.

J S Bach was the first composer chosen, a choral from the organ book, *Ebarme dich mein*, arranged for string orchestra by Rouits himself. It gave the lovely, softly repeated melody a heavenly aspect for the opening of the concert. *Shades and flames of retribution* were faraway. No devils tonight. We were by the pool of tranquility.

The arrangement was simple, without any suggestion of déjà vu — a night *piece with footsteps heard in the distance* suggesting unease but bringing, finally, security.

The *Stabat Mater* of Pergolesi followed. It is for two voices, soprano and *low contralto, accompanied by a string* orchestra and organ. The latter, not much in evidence, was played by Olga Kouznetsova.

The *Stabat Mater*, calm, almost *marmorealy so, is supercharged beneath its* unruffled surface, possessing a depth of emotion equal to the Verdi *Requiem*. It needs concentrated effort and acceptance of its true nature, a devout but *troubled understanding of the crucifixion* of Christ. It lays the situation out in music of often frightening rawness and brevity, presenting problems, dramatic and spiritual, while at the *same time demanding an understanding* of the place of the piece in European religious music. Nearly all these demands were met in this performance.

Authentic or not, Dominique Rouits had a clear idea of his own sound, and it was quickly revealed as richly nuanced, without mannerism though suggesting a converse with the 20th century, heightening the force and drama of agonised people around the cross of Jesus. Such feelings are from a culture far removed from that of Cairo today, and it says a great deal for all concerned that its validity and force came over with such clarity.

The piece is divided into short musical episodes, each expressing a verse from the Latin poem by Jacopone da Todi. The mother's anguish is clearly defined, *as is the anguish of the sympathiser*. The poem speaks of the shipwreck of a soul coming to salvation through life's agonies, the same sentiment that informs Grunewald's *Christ's Farewell to his Mother and the* slow movement of Bruckner's eighth symphony. It is a moment that has taken the culture of Europe to its highest pinnacles.

As the momentum of the work moves in waves of oblique and disturbed observation to a calm beyond pain it delivers a message not so much of hope but of courage. The ending is hard — *saints and angels speak through Per*golesi in this work.

The two singers must bear the brunt of the dramatic aspect of this work. They managed with courage and dignity, *if not always with ease. Ratiba El-*Hefny excels at committed concentration, as she showed with her singing of the Verdi *Requiem*. She avoided the cold, detached, flute-like singing that *passes for religious. Instead came a* forthright, almost operatic attack, some*times off the line, but always welcome* for its sincerity. Nevine Allouba, soprano, going way, way down in the deeps, was both audible and emotive. She plunged deep — Kathleen Ferrier *used to sing this music — and both so*loists caught the mood of the emotion.



Dominique Rouits

The Akhenaten Orchestra and Dominique Rouits gave a moving account of the work. There was nothing holy or *vapid, and the dimensions of the piece* were beautifully arranged. Sheer noise can get an orchestra up many steps but never to the top. This collection of singers and players were unconcerned with *noise. They gave the essence and the* central quality — compassion and endurance — with great purity of purpose. Hopefully, perhaps, the ear of the composer was present.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra; conductor, Taha Nagui; Gomhouria Theatre, 5 April

*The rip-tide opening of the Bolshoi sea*son at the Opera House brought many late survivors to this concert. Cross country travel was about the only way to get through the city to this mixed bag of a concert. Frivolities dominated the programme: nonetheless the Cairo Symphony, under Taha Nagui, played for its life.

Mozart's *Kleine Nachtmusik* is pop, but never kitsch. None of the music played at this concert set out to be popular, it just met with a loving public. There was no soliciting of this love, it simply happened. Mozart, in anycase, could never write a kitsch note, though some composers find it difficult to write anything else. The Night Music ends brisk, sharp and tangy, which is how it was conducted by Taha Nagui.

Brahms and Hungary are a little like Brahms and things collegiate — a part of his romanticism. Not being political, the Brahms of these pieces is pure music. There is nothing theatrical about the Hungarian Dances.

The dances chosen for this concert were written over a long period, from youth to old age. Repetition — those selected were the most familiar — never *stales them. And unlike Liszt*, Brahms never sank to the cabaret Hungarian. His Hungary was never Czarda's Furstin, whereas Liszt's always was.

The orchestra managed all the lurches *and sudden bursts of froth with pleasure* and fun.

Tchaikovsky and the *Nutcracker Suite* seem everywhere at the moment, given the publicity accruing to the Bolshoi's *current visit. Cairo Symphony managed* Tchaikovsky's greatest ballet score with aplomb.

The concert ended with the Rossini overture to the opera *La Gazza Ladra. Taha Nagui seemed to enjoy the stee*plechase run up to the big, noisy, brilliant finale of the overture. The Gomhouria was far from full for this concert though the applause showed that those *who stayed had been more than happy* to do so.

Art

Undermining sentiments

How thin the heart? Who is to say, asks **Nigel Ryan**

Tu es la lumière de ma vie — the saccharine sentiment, etched in a narrow strip of wood, might have quasi-*religious* overtones, but these are successfully deflated by the neat, graffiti-like script, by the bright, almost fluorescent yellow with which this particular *scrap of wood has been paint*ed. The words, if they do not quite ring hollow, are certainly denuded of any portent simply by the manner of their pres*entation. The scrap on which* they have been incised was probably thrown away just as the sentence is itself throwaway.

There is nothing in the Swiss artist Jean Crotti's current exhibition at Cairo Berlin that does not seek so hard to make a virtue of equivocation that at times one is convinced. It is an appealing formulation, this collection of scraps, of urban flotsam washed up on the pavements. So much is co-opted into the project. There are torn up washing powder packets, the printed Persil forming a suitable opening for a punning *Parsifal. The lids of pizza de*livery boxes form an equally appropriate ground for a swooning couple. There is a Baraka label, with scarlet heart worn on the sleeve. A couple is glimpsed through the hole in the top of a box of tissues, and though their expressions seem intense, the floral printed box does not really encourage the viewer to take such things seriously. Nothing really *is that serious*, certainly not these *couplings*.

Predictably, the only characters with teeth in this show are women. The men *have lips through* which, on occasion, protrudes a tongue. In one piece the tongue is itself adorned with a heart, flat as a communion wafer. FUN is scratched into another piece of wood. Lino prints are made on scraps of fabric, figures are superimposed onto postcards of Alpine scenes replete with wooden chalets. It is whimsical, often immediate — there is *nothing studied*, nothing overdone. Indeed, there seems a constant craving in the majority of these miniatures — they are all, bar one piece, small scale — to leave everything as underdone as possible.

Mon coeur ne peut l'oublier: it is handwritten in the corner of a postcard of an Alpine scene in the foreground of which are three figures, head and shoulder cut outs, peering beyond the frame at the viewer. One cannot help wondering whether these faces are intended as portraits, though in all but a very few cases this seems *unlikely*, since they operate, and can only be made sense of, as types. And it is because of this, because of such simple reductionism, that tensions arise.



Tu me fais rougir, Jean Crotti

There is a single large piece in the exhibition and it is large — some 255x160cm. It is one of only two pieces in an exhibition that is heavily peopled (though peopled, admittedly by types) where some attempt has been made to portray the subject. And it must count among the least successful exhibits in the show. Nothing included in this exhibition — unfortunate only in this particular case — is capable of carrying the weight of such individuality, except, of course, for the artist himself, whose guiding hand guides everything and everybody towards the status of *objet typif*. Only he is somewhere up there, perhaps on one of those snow clad peaks, looking a little wryly, perhaps, at his creations.

There is a suggestion of icon*oclasm about many of the piec*es, though for something so self-consciously geared towards the throwaway to pursue such a theme is to be guilty of the wrong sort of seriousness. And in the end, despite the grime on the face of one particular pouting boy, *dolce vita* inscribed in sloping characters beneath his shoulders — or is it a T-shirt slogan? — mud is peculiarly out of place.

In this exhibition there are, in the end, few consolations. Everything is just too thin, as thin as the heart or communion wafer, as thin, perhaps, as bracing mountain air. And in the process of flattening, in this thinning out, it is not just that these works are drained of the significations that they intend to undermine, the problem is that they become little more than caricatures.

Jean Crotti, at Cairo Berlin Art Gallery, continues until 3 May. For full details see Listings.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Gaber Nassar (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri. 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 10 April.

Hisham El-Zeiny (Paintings)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 10 April.

Shozo Harada (Watercolours) & Kamiko Harada (Ikebana)
El-Shomou Gallery, Villa 12, 150 El-Horreiya Sq, Maadi. Tel 350 0081. 10 April, 11am-8pm; 11 April, 11am-5pm.

Remembering Mario Rossi
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9.30am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 12 April.
In celebration of the Italian architect's centenary.

George Bahgory & Afif Sharfawi (Paintings)
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 4pm-8.30pm. Until 15 April.
Under the title Homes and Places, the artists exhibit works inspired by Sanaa and Wahran respectively.

AUC Art Students Exhibition
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. Daily exc Fri, 9am-9pm. Until 16 April.

Valparaiso: A Legend Between Two Centuries (Lithographs, postcards & photographs)
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. 30 March-15 April. Opening hours: 10 April, 10am-1pm & 4pm-8pm; 11-15 April, 5pm-8pm.

Ahmed Abdel-Karim (Paintings) & Halim Yacoub (Sculptures)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, corner of Montaza St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 16 April.

Ute Schönemann (Paintings)
Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St, Downtown. Tel 575 9877. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 8am-7pm; Fri 8am-12pm. Until 25 April.
Works under the title Faces of The Desert.

The Water of The Desert (Photographs)
Al-Ahram Gallery, Al-Ahram Bldg, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 5786300. Daily 9am-10pm. Until 27 April.

Vissela Farid (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3241. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. 14-27 April.

A Leap Into The Past: The Bracciano Lake 8000 Years Ago
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 9am-2pm & 5pm-9pm. 14-28 April.
Documents of underwater archaeological research in Italy.

Jean Crotti (Paintings)
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Luq. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 3 May.
New works under the title Pas Sages Comme Les Images.

Domestic Architecture in Islamic Egypt
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, AUC, corner of El-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 5436. Sun-Wed 8.30am-7pm, Thur 8.30am-5pm & Sat 12pm-5pm. Until 5 May.

Ann Parker
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 8 May.
These 34 colour photographs record the palette of mostly self-taught artists exemplifying the folk art of the Great Pilgrimage. Including are representations of the Kaaba, images of transportation, calligraphic inscriptions and pastoral renderings of Islamic worship.

Publications of the Greek Community in Egypt From 1853-1983
Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 18 Sidi El-Metwalli St, El-Attarin, Alexandria. Tel (03) 482 1598. Until 10 May.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiya*, lustreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mameluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

Imman Dharam
Maulana Abul-Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3396. 10 April, 4.30pm.
Starring Amitab Bachchan.

Big Joys, Small Sorrows
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 355 3962/3. 10 April, 6pm.
The life story of a lighthouse keeper and his family from 1973 to 1986.

Italian Films
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
12 April, 7pm: Ludwig (p.I), directed by L Visconti (1973).
6 April, 7pm: Miracolo A Milano, directed by V de Sica (1951).

Under The Sign of The Water
Goethe Institute, 5 Abdel-Salam Aref St (ex Bustan St), Downtown. Tel 575 9877. 10 April, 7pm.
In conjunction with The Water of The Desert exhibition.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.



Ahmed Abdel-Karim

Bekhit Wa Adila II (Bekhit and Adila II)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Hallaq Hoash
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Imra'a Fawq El-Qemma (A Woman At The Top)
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

Hassan El-Loll
Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm.

VIP
Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm.

The Daylight
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm.

Tin Cup
New Odeon II, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Thur & Sat, midnight.

That Thing You Do
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.

French Kiss
Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

Escape from L.A.
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Jerry Maguire
El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.

The Hunchback of Notre-Dame
Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

Heaven's Prisoners
El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Karim I, as above. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

One Fine Day
MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. New Odeon III, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

The Glimmer Man
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

The Craft
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Solo
New Odeon I, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

MUSIC

Arabic Music Ensemble
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 0598. 10 April, 8pm.
Conducted by Salah Ghobashi.

Jazz Recital
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 10 & 11 April, 9pm.
Yehia Khalil performs.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra & Schuberbundes Essen Choir
Gomhouriya Theatre, as above. 12 April, 9pm.
Perform compositions by Brahms, conducted by Ahmed El-Saedi.

Piano Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 13 April, 8pm.
Ghada Shaker performs.

DANCE

Swan Lake Ballet
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0598. 11-16 April, 8pm.
Performed by the Bolshoi Ballet

THEATRE

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.
Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

Balouza Fil Ballon (Balouza at the Balloon)
Balloon Theatre, Corniche El-Nil, Agouza. Tel 347 1718. Daily 9pm.

Messa' El-Kheir Ya Masr (Good Evening Egypt)
Mohamed Farid Theatre, Emadeddin St. Tel 770 603. Daily 9pm.

Wada'an Ya Bakawat (Farewell, Sirs)
George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 9pm.

LECTURES

New Discoveries at Hierakonpolis
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Dr Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. 10 April, 5.30pm.
Lecture by Dr Renée Friedman, University of California.

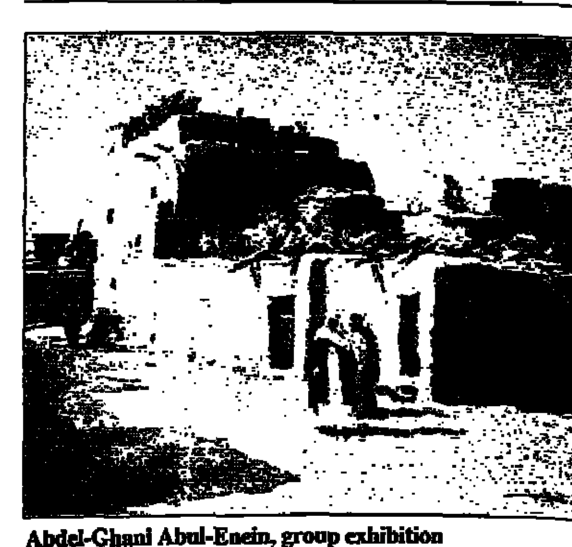
Presentation of the Second Volume of Annuary of The Society of Greek and Roman Studies
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 10 April, 6pm.
Presentation by professors Farouk El-Khadi and Lotfi Abdel-Wahab.

Introducing The Pigorini Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum of Rome
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 14 April, 6pm.
Lecture by Professor Maria Antonietta Fugazzola Delpino, director of the museum.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries



Abdel-Ghani Abul-Enein, group exhibition

BAS reliefs and sculptures in bronze and polyester resin by **Halim Yaqoub** are on show at the **Extra Gallery**. Though these tend towards the abstract, they are grounded in the academic rules of sculpture and effectively give body to a stasis-movement dynamic.

Also at the Extra Gallery are paintings by **Ahmed Abdel-Karim**. Whimsical in subject matter — smiling cats, the paper boats of the nursery — these are nonetheless studied and balanced in composition.

The foyer of the Al-Ahram Building, Galaa Street hosts an exhibition of works in a variety of media by numerous artists under the title *Views of Al-Wadi Al-Gedid*. The oasis landscape with its houses, doors and alleyways, these are captured atmospherically by the works on show.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**



Images of cosmopolitanism, or a nostalgia for an Alexandrian golden age that never quite shone through its tarnish?

Where love's labours are seldom lost

Robert Mabro, in a recently delivered lecture at the American University in Cairo, outlined the multi-faceted ambiguities in literary potrayals of Alexandria, the city of his birth. Below is the author's abridged version of the text

There was a cosmopolitan Alexandria. It emerged in the mid-19th century and disappeared in the 1960s or thereabouts. A romantic and fascinating image of this cosmopolitan society was drawn by a number of writers and poets — all foreigners, all endowed with great literary talent — and this image is deeply engraved in the Western mind. Indeed, this image is so powerful as to push in the background all others. Alexandria, where the share of the Egyptian population was never less than 80 per cent of the total, has become identified, almost exclusively, with its cosmopolitan image.

The image was created by Cavafy, Forster, Durrell and most recently Aciman, among many others. It made thousands of readers round the world dream about and love Alexandria. Yet these authors themselves had ambivalent feelings about the city where they lived, some, like Durrell, for a short time, and others, like Cavafy, for most of their adult life.

The discrepancy between the sentiments and views of writers and the image they created and imparted in the minds of intelligent and sensitive readers has often troubled me. It is part of a much wider set of discrepancies between perceptions and reality, expectations and fulfilment, nostalgic images and past frustrations which characterise the relationship of 'cosmopolitans' and foreign 'passers by' with Alexandria. And these discrepancies are symptoms, or indeed effects, of the varied and deep ambiguities which geography and history have heaped on Alexandria. The analysis of these ambiguities is for another article. I would like to focus exclusively here on four authors who did not really like the city but bestowed it with so much fascination in their works.

Let us start with Cavafy. He was born in 1863 and spent some years of his youth in England and Constantinople, then returned to Alexandria at the age of 22, and dwelt there until his death in 1933. For many years Cavafy hated the city. He was homosexual and this, inevitably, caused social problems. He had to hide his inclinations, particularly from his mother, who was so close to him, and from neighbours, relatives and colleagues. He must have harboured ambivalent feelings about the need to compromise and the honourable desire to be honest with himself.

That he transferred his feelings of unease about his attitude and his resentment about social taboos to the city where he lived unhappily is perfectly understandable. The city was the objective environment, the natural target of subjective frustrations.

According to Edmund Keeley (*Cavafy's Alexandria*, Princeton 1996,) Cavafy began to feel reconciled with Alexandria by 1907, when he was 44 years old. This simply means that by that time he was beginning to be reconciled with himself. Not that the tensions had completely vanished. They persisted, but Keeley thinks that they had become more bearable. In a note discovered by George Savidis in Cavafy's archives after his death he stated: "By now I have become used to Alexandria." However, he is not entirely sure. In the same breath he said: "...how the place disturbs me and what lack of freedom" (Keeley, p19).

Things changed by 1910, when the poet was by then 47 years old — a middle age man who had spent 25 years of adult life in Alexandria, time to adjust both to himself and the city. He had indeed changed. Keeley argues that partial evidence is to be found in the comparison of the first version (1894) of one of Cavafy's most famous poems, 'The City', and the version which saw the light of day only in 1910.

The two significant revisions were as follows. In 1894 Cavafy wrote: "I am disgusted by what my eye sees, by what my ear hears". This is replaced in 1910 by: "whatever I try to do is fated to turn out wrong". Cavafy no longer blamed the city but turned the focus onto himself.

Again, a verse in the 1894 version of 'The City' which read: "I hate the people here and they hate me" was replaced in 1910 by: "Wherever I turn, wherever I look, I see the black ruins of my life here..." He does not hate anymore but mourns his life's failures.

His reconciliation with himself, which is identically his reconciliation with Alexandria, is related to an increased confidence in his talent as a poet. The confidence was helped by the recognition he was receiving from literary circles both in Egypt and Greece. Cavafy, by this time, had developed a new vision of Alexandria — a historical myth rich in glories and poetical potential. The myth superseded reality, making reality likable. In a poem published in 1917, when he was 54 years old, he referred to Alexandria, his old hate, as"the city I love".

The ambiguity of Cavafy's relationship with himself and society was first projected on Alexandria. After a long time he surmounted this ambiguity at the personal level by letting the poet in him integrate the homosexual. And the poet found his privileged modes of expression in eroticism, his true self, and in a reconstructed Alexandrian historical myth.

Reconciled with himself the Alexandria he watched with despondency and aloofness from his balcony, or in his daily walk between his gloomy flat and his boring office, became the object of a new transfer. The reality was transformed by the myth through which his poetical talent blossomed. Hate, the manifestation of psychological and social ambiguities, became love because a myth succeeded in imposing the bright colours of the imaginary on a grey reality.

E M Forster, who was Cavafy's friend, was also associated with cosmopolitan Alexandria. He wrote a marvellous guide to the city in a style of inimitable sobriety, simplicity and elegance but had ambiguous feelings about the city. These reflected personal problems and difficult psychological adjustments.

He did not like the city very much but was happy during his sojourn there, not least because he was avoiding the carnage of the First World War. (Forster was posted in Alexandria in 1915 as a voluntary worker serving in the Red Cross.)

Egypt disappointed him, because he had great expectations and had been excited about the prospects of going there and finding another India. He wrote that "he did not see" Egypt, being in Alexandria, "for Alexandria is cosmopolitan".

Forster thus perceived Alexandria in its dual identity: the gate to (and as such a part of) Egypt and the shield that hides the face of Egypt from those who do not want to see some of its features. As always we find here the ambiguity of Alexandria's identity.

Forster was also dismissive of Alexandria itself. He wrote to his mother soon after his arrival:

"One cannot dislike Alex... because it is impossible to dislike either the sea or stones. But it consists of nothing else as far as I can gather; just a cosmopolitan town by some blue water."

Forster's biographer, P N Furbank, believes that he never learned to love Egypt or Alexandria. The sojourn in the city, however, brought him sexual fulfilment. According to a more recent biographer, Nicola Bauman, "it was only in Alexandria that he found it on his own terms". And like Cavafy, Forster adjusted to Alexandria when he became reconciled with his own sexuality.

Forster's perception of Alexandria was graphically expressed in *Pharos and Pharillon*, published in 1923, four years after his departure from the city, in which he wrote:

"Modern Alexandria is scarcely a city of the soul. Founded upon cotton with the concurrence of onions and eggs, ill built, ill planned, ill drained — many hard things can be said against it..."

But with the passage of time his views changed completely. In the preface to the second edition of his famous *Alexandria: a History and a Guide*, published in Egypt in 1938, 19 years after his departure, he wrote: "She is still the city of friends, who are willing unselfishly to set aside their own work and to work for others..."

And further on: "The Alexandria I know and loved belongs to the war years. I was very happy there...and gradually fell in love with many of her inhabitants and the whole of her past." He also referred to it in this 1938 preface as "my own city".

We encounter here, with Forster looking back at Alexandria after an absence of 19 years, the same nostalgia felt by all cosmopolitan Alexandrians exiled in Canada, Europe, Australia and elsewhere. And nostalgia involves a discrepancy between today's feelings transformed by time and distance and the harsher views held in the past.

After Forster entered Durrell, the author of the famous Quartet (*Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive* and *Clea*). He contributed more to the skewed image of Alexandria than either Cavafy or Forster. Cavafy retreated to the glorious past. Forster described it with clinical neatness, in terse but evocative sentences, for the benefit of tourists lucky enough to get a copy of his guide. But Durrell drew poetic pictures of the town that, according to his own admission in the first page of *Justine*, "we inhabited so briefly together". He found in Alexandria corresponding characteristics to the peculiar features of his own soul.

It was Durrell, much more than Forster, and much more than Cavafy, I dare say, who sent people dreaming about the city which speaks so many languages but only expresses itself in the language of others, which makes love in so many ways but fails to lose itself in love, conspires despite the lack of any political agenda and sweats, pretending to be active while remaining passive.

The city that fascinates when it has nothing to offer. This is Durrell's Alexandria; the ambiguity at its most extreme. Is Durrell a creation of Alexandria or is Alexandria Durrell's creation? The identity of the city and the writer is now here, now there and sometimes nowhere. And Durrell, as Professor John Rodenbeck reminded us in a lecture, "did not like the city with which he became so deeply associated in literary fame". Writing to Henry Miller in the spring of 1994, Durrell passed a judgement on his friend's would-be feelings towards the city should he ever visit it before going on to describe Alexandria as follows:

"First this steaming flatness — not a hill or a mound anywhere — choked to bursting point with bones and the crummy deposits of wiped out cultures. Then this smashed up broken-down shabby Neapolitan town... no music, no art, no real gaiety."

Finally, Durrell the writer damns the place which fails him where it matters most, the city which fails the writer in him. He stated: "No, if one could write a single line of anything that had a human smell to it here, one would be a genius."

Well, some years later Durrell wrote thousands lines about this damned 'here' but he wrote them elsewhere. Had he discovered by then "the human smell" of the city or was he simply a genius alchemist able to turn rusty iron into gold? In 1944 Durrell had no other desire but to leave Alexandria. "I am hoping the war will be soon over so I can quit."

Quitting is André Aciman's theme. His novel, or memoir, is titled *Out of Egypt* . He and his family left Alexandria at the very end of the cosmopolitan period, in the mid-1960s, when virtually all Jewish families and a vast proportion of foreigners had gone. He was still very young during the last year of his sojourn.

The cosmopolitan Alexandria had been emptied, and the book's background is an Alexandria empty of content and meaning. There is no myth as in Cavafy's, no sober geographical and historical descriptions as in Forster's, no phantasms translated into poetry and introspection as in Durrell. Alexandria is absent from Aciman's book, which is a memoir of his family's life in Alexandria.

Poets, novelists and writers, all foreigners, created an image of cosmopolitan Alexandria, the product of a complex interaction between the ambiguities of their inner selves and those of the city. Stratis Tsirkas stands alone as a cosmopolitan citizen who got it right about the city in his famous trilogy, *Drifting Cities* . But because he got it right he is not counted as an image maker.

I should like to conclude with a reference to Robert Ilbert, who wrote in his monumental book on cosmopolitan Alexandria (*Alexandria 1830-1930*, 2 vols, Cairo, 1996) that you cannot reduce the identity of the city to those literary expressions. There was a cosmopolitan identity, not without its charm but replete with ambiguities. It will remain for the moment a subject for future explorations.

The writer, a fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford University, was born, educated and worked in Alexandria between 1934-1960)

Plain Talk

From time to time I find myself evoking the PEN Charter, which is based on the premise that literature, whatever its national origins, knows no frontiers and should remain common currency between nations regardless of political or international upheavals.

The charter came to my mind when I met a group of American writers, literary agents, publishers and bookshop owners. This group, whom I had the pleasure of hosting on my TV programme *Open Forum*, were members of a delegation, representing a USIA programme entitled "Corridors of Culture".

The objective of the programme, as stipulated in the brochure that accompanies it, is "to encourage and support writers in their effort to live and work in free societies."

The programme was created in 1994 and sends delegations of American writers, editors and literary agents to meet with their counterparts, and share insights and practical information about the writers' craft in a free society.

The delegation to Egypt includes Mary Gay Shipley, the owner of a leading bookshop; Lawrence Wright, a writer of non-fiction and a regular contributor to leading American magazines, including the *New Yorker*; Ashbel Green, senior editor of Knopf, a leading American publisher; Wendy Weil, literary agent and Al Young, a leading African American poet and novelist.

The delegation had the opportunity of meeting with a number of writers and publishers and organised a seminar for them at the Mubarak Library which was moderated by Ibrahim El-Moallem, the chairman of El-Shorouk publishing house.

The delegation has arrived at a time when publishing, and the many problems the industry faces, seems to be the flavour of the month. In this respect I would like to present a report prepared by the National Council of Culture and Information, dealing with this very issue. The report tabulates a number of obstacles which face both the production and the distribution of Egyptian books. At one time, the report says, Egypt was the regional centre in the field of book production. Unfortunately, due to some problems, other Arab countries are now taking the lead in this field. Egyptian publishers, seemingly, are at a disadvantage when they compete with publishers based in petro-dollar countries. What is significant, though, is the fact that while book production in these countries is flourishing, the majority of authors are Egyptian. This means that while the material aspects of book production has advanced in a number of Arab countries, the content of the books remains largely Egyptian.

The report tabulates the many obstacles publishers face, chief among which is the steep rise in production costs due to the increase of the paper prices. Customs and duties imposed on books, together with copyright infringements and out and out piracy of entire texts also constitute significant problems. the legal difficulties involved in suing against copyright infringements that occur in other countries often prove insurmountable, and very few cases are actually pursued across national boundaries.

Perhaps in the light of the new GATT Agreement, such problems will be easy to solve.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Books

Forever out of reach

Alexandrie 1830-1930 (2 vols), Robert Ilbert; Cairo: Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale, Bibliotheque d'Etude 112/1 112/2, 1996

When Robert Ilbert began his researches in Alexandria in 1981 he had already defined his field — the urban development of the city and its relationship with the rest of the country in the 19th and 20th centuries. So far, everyone was agreed that Alexandria and its surroundings were tangential to the mainstream of Egyptian culture. Ilbert had no intention of spending more than a few years on the work since it was intended to be merely a fragment of a more intensive study of urban habitat and its transformations. Moreover, while going through the Municipality and Library archives, starting from 1900, he felt he was excavating a lost civilisation as removed from today as Ptolemaic or Byzantine Alexandria. Two events were to make him change his mind — the 1988 foundation of the Alexandrina, the Mediterranean Library, and the opening of the Leopold Senghor International French University.

History never dies in the collective memory, vision cannot be limited to the present — in short, Alexandria, Ilbert realised, had become one of the myths of modern times, the city serving as a key to the world of imagination. Far from being peripheral to Egypt, Alexandria belonged to it and could well serve as a prototype for its transformation — political, social and ideological — with the added factor of the presence of foreign communities and colonies modelling its life.

It was from this new perspective that Ilbert began his work on the birth, growth and fall of the Alexandrian community from 1825 to the 1930s. The poor, dirty, provincial town that had dissappointed so many 18th century travelers had long since long its economic power to Rosetta and Damietta, its ancient glamour submerged till practically invisible. As a consequence, when Mohammed Ali decided to make the city the headquarters for his Asian and Mediterranean policies, he had first to breathe life into the town. He proceeded to endow it with the substructure of a military and commercial port, including a navy and dockyards. His priorities were not development or modernisation per se, but to bolster his political and military ambitions.

It never entered his mind to beautify the place or to salvage its monuments. What he needed were functional barracks and navigation facilities. But in the long run it made no difference, for the processes he had initiated continued despite the failure of Mohammed Ali's Mediterranean ambitions. Indeed, the failure itself, and the obligation to accept the Anglo-Turkish policy of free exchange, put an end to monopolies and stimulated financial and commercial operations on the Alexandrian market. Business thrived. Activities were helped along by the building of railways and the expansion of the docks to cope with increased sea traffic. Minyet El-Basal was developed into an export centre, until it became the cotton stock exchange after the boom of 1863. On the back of this new gold rush, speculators, dealers and adventurers arrived in droves, from Europe, the US, Sudan. The financial and juridical priveleges accorded to foreigners by the capitulations provided a further incentive until, with the opening of the Suez Canal, Alexandria had established itself as one of the gates of the new world order, a centre of exchange, but also of distribution and the exploitation of the Delta. The port, rebuilt and enlarged, proved so costly that the creditors took it over as a guarantee, a first step towards occupation.

The pieces of the mosaic were in place, a mixed population ready to seize each and any opportunity to make their fortunes before returning home; families on the make: the great powers bickering amongst themselves for more influence over the khedive and a greater share of the spoils, all of which added to the confusion of customs, beliefs and legislation. Yet from all of this a close knit, unique society was to emerge, ready to face the tensions and contractions inherent in its constitution.

There were already schools, a common language (French), newspapers (among them *Al-Ahram* founded in 1875) flourishing in an atmosphere of relative press freedom, a police force largely controlled by foreigners, in addition to numerous charitable organisations and hospitals. Soon industrial enterprises were established and, although small-scale at first, they were a sign of growing economic stability. But there was another side to the picture — the poverty stricken *fellahin* and the destitute Maltese, Greeks or Italians living in the *eshash* (shantytowns) rife with epidemics and deprivation. This disparity was marked by a sharp physical demarcation dividing West from East, rich from poor, the "elite" from the "common herd". And yet, even the more salubrious districts had their pockets of smelly, dirty, unhealthy backstreets and houses.

The 1882 crisis was going to sweep it all away. The town was left in ruins, by British bombardment, but not for long: within five years a new Alexandria arose on the ruins of the old, built by the same families that had lived there before. They wanted order, they wanted institutional and legal reforms, but they wanted, too, to retain their independence. British colonialism was going to grant them their wishes, not out of kindness, but simply because those wishes fitted in with British designs.

A case in point is the creation of the Municipality by decree in 1890. Its members, the future city fathers, intended to reorganise services to promote and boost business, mostly in the city fathers' hands. What they got was responsibility: they were replacing the authorities in almost every sector of civil life, from health to education to public utilities. This transfer of responsibility was accompanied, almost inevitably, by trial and error, by mistakes and scandals, by schemes that came to nothing and yet others that were implemented a full 20 years after first being mooted. Yet in spite of criticisms, the Municipality went about its tasks with a degree of panache.

As private citizens, the members of the Municipality were the benefactors of numerous community foundations, willing to use their influence as well as their wealth to help their co-citizens, donating plots of land, art collections, and bequeathing large sums of money for various public projects. On one front, though, their efforts were doomed to fail. The population continued to rise, slums proliferated, and poverty remained ever present.

In the second volume Ilbert studies the transformation from a concrete, practical administration geared towards dealing with urgent questions on a day to day basis to one more geared to implementing longer term strategies vis-à-vis town planning and urban policy. This change involved giving priority to enlisting the services of technical experts rather than depending on government clerks in order to avoid time consuming mistakes in the drafting of minutely detailed maps and ground plans. The city planners' primary concern was to prevent urban sprawl. In any event, it was impossible for them to impose architectural harmony: newly constructed homes conformed only to the individual tastes of their owners. Fashion favored European styles, generally inspired by Nice, Cannes or Vienna rather than by Paris or London, although this did not preclude the use of local skills and the continuity of traditional ways of life. The result was a Mediterranean aggregate rather than a European town.

The new construction regulations offered untold opportunities for speculators and profiteers. They had a field day. Even so, this cloud had a silver lining as public opinion organised itself into protective commissions and appealed to a press that was quite willing to oblige. On the strength of public action, the spurious activities of several established businessmen who had been on the Municipality were exposed. These were replaced by "native" financiers and economists who would later turn to politics. Ultimately, however, the government took matters in hand. By 1935 the Municipality would become another government department, even though its fourteen members, the majority of whom were Egyptian, would be selected by a more broadly based electorate.

The Municipality's decisions were increasingly dictated directly from Cairo — city administration and economic management had become national, not merely local, concerns. Numerous political developments and upheavals would contribute to furthering the trend towards centralised decision-making in urban affairs. In 1937 the Capitulations were revoked and in 1949 the Joint Courts were closed. It was the end of the era of "protected" nationalities. Arabic was consecrated as the official language; citizenship meant Egyptian. At the same time international political currents began to ripple through the city: Zionism, Communism, Trade Unionism, and Anarchism affected each stratum of the population to varying degrees. The Greek and Italian communities were inspired by dreams of resurrecting the lost empires of Alexander and the Caesars. Sometimes these dreams were reflections of political activism: the Greeks participated in the struggle for the freedom and independence of Egypt while the Italians sought to establish colonies under a fascist regime. In all cases, Alexandria was central to their visions.

These trends and movements contributed to disrupting the fragile equilibrium that had been achieved by a group of people who had managed to combine heterogeneous elements and to evolve a special identity in harmony with the space they occupied and their own conception of time. But the old world did not vanish overnight. Some inhabitants remained and either tried to acclimitise to the new circumstances or, conversely, attempted to shut out reality by confining themselves to a closed circle of clubs, cafés and societies. Many others left. But in their collective memory, the city was regenerated from their dreams and continued to inspire their work, their songs, their poems: Alexandria — eternally beautiful; forever out of reach.

Reviewed by **Mona Refaat**

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

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Mohamed Ali, who ruled Egypt for 45 years starting in 1805, was the founder of the royal family that ended with King Farouk's overthrow by the army in 1952. In this instalment of his *Diwan* series, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** tells how Egypt celebrated the centennial of Mohamed Ali's coming to power. The account is based on his perusal of many issues of *Al-Ahram* in April and May of 1905. The platinum jubilee festivities took place on 13 May 1905, with celebrations held in many urban centres throughout the country in addition to Cairo. The event spawned development projects, particularly in the education field. Foremost among them was the founding of Egypt's first university, known today as Cairo University


Illustration: Makram Henein

"It is my pleasure to invite you to honour our home in Bab El-Luq at 4.00pm on Thursday 20 April in order to discuss plans for the celebration of the centennial of the ascension to the throne of the late Mohamed Ali Pasha, the restorer of civilisation to Egypt. Please accept my utmost respect."

The foregoing was the text of an invitation sent by Mohamed Al-Shawarbi, the deputy speaker of the Legislative Council, to numerous notables and dignitaries in the capital. *Al-Ahram*, which published the text on the same day it was issued in 1905, took the occasion to express its delight that it and *Al-Liwa'*, published by the famous nationalist leader Mustafa Kamel, were the first to receive invitations to this event.

Two weeks previously, *Al-Ahram* had appealed to the nation to celebrate on 13 May "the centennial of Mohamed Ali Pasha, the founder of the khedival dynasty and the man who awoke Egypt from its slumber *and resurrected it. Every Egyptian*, indeed everyone who lives in Egypt, is indebted for an element of his livelihood in the Nile Valley to this great and brilliant man as, before him, the country was an arid wasteland which he transformed into a flourishing paradise."

Only a month before the appointed day, *Al-Ahram* was unhappy that its appeal had not drawn a response. On 12 April it wrote, "As yet we have not seen a drive among the people of the nation nor an inclination on the part of the government to make preparations in anticipation of the celebration of this occasion." In conclusion, the newspaper warned, "A country which does not honour and commemorate its great men is doomed to torpor, division, and degradation. To neglect to commemorate the deeds of its great men is an indication of an indolence that no Egyptian should tolerate for *the sake of his nation*."

The newspaper only felt appeased when a group of "prominent citizens undertook to discuss the appropriate manner to celebrate this occasion and the necessary preparations to be made." This was the group headed by Mohamed El-Shawarbi. In its first meeting the group decided to form a committee composed of two representatives of each denomination in order to draw up a proposal for the celebrations. Their initial plan consisted of a gala fête to be held at the Barrages, one of the most important accomplishments of Mohamed Ali, and, in Alexandria, the statue of Mohamed Ali would be decorated with electric lights and surrounded by electric signs listing this ruler's major achievements. The initial plan was very modest in comparison to the celebrations that actually transpired. On 11 May, two days before the celebrations of an anniversary which to *Al-Ahram* was an important national holiday, Abbas II travelled to his summer residence in Alexandria. One can detect the tone of astonishment in *Al-Ahram*'s report of the khedive's departure. "His Royal Highness the Khedive has sent to the honourable Mohamed El-Shawarbi, the chairman of the festivities committee for the Mohamed Ali centennial, a letter in which His Royal Highness expressed his regrets for not being able to attend the celebrations that will be held in Cairo." More disconcerting was the effect this had on the ministers. As *Al-Ahram* remarks, "What has astonished the people up to the present is the silence of those members of government who appear to be refraining from participating in this event."

It is difficult to determine the reasons which compelled the khedive and the government to take this position. Perhaps it was because the initiative did not originally come from Abdin Palace. On the other hand, it is possible that Abbas' position represented an attempt to curry favour with the British occupation authorities. One suspects that such a patriotically inspired occasion would not be viewed favourably by the British. Indeed, four days before the celebrations, *Al-Ahram* noted, "Only one view disagrees with that of the nation — the view of the occupation authorities. These are the authorities that steer the helm of government and the government is not participating in the celebration. They have the supremacy and influence and we see them loath to join in the nation's jubilation at this centennial."

Once again, the newspaper provides no insight into the reasons for the British reluctance. It could be that they were cautious in promoting the commemoration of a man whose enterprise of carving a powerful position for Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean during the first half of the 19th century brought Egypt into conflict with British interests, provoking the British to act to destroy this ambitious enterprise. In light of that history, the British may well have feared that celebrations of this sort would have heavy nationalist overtones and fuel resistance against the British occupation.

Whatever causes the British, the khedive and the cabinet may have had for refusing to encourage the celebrations, they had no good cause to prevent them and the organisers went ahead with their preparations. Yet, in view of the lack of official support, they had to take it upon themselves to raise funding themselves. The question of funding was precisely the main topic on the agenda of the meeting hosted by El-Shawarbi on 20 April. The committee voted to invite donations and those assembled in El-Shawarbi's home were the first to contribute: LE403, not an inconsiderable sum by the standards of the time.

What the organisers probably could not have predicted in their meeting two weeks before 13 May 1905 was that the public would be so generous in its contributions that they would be able to mount a spectacle worthy of the occasion. However, before proceeding with the details, it is important to note why they had settled upon 13 May. Although the history of Mohamed Ali's ascension to the position of *wali* (governor) over Egypt is well known, the account which *Al-Ahram* provided its readers of this event in its Friday, 13 May edition makes interesting reading. It relates: "The Mameluke princes were in constant warfare among themselves and oppressed the people who viewed them with increasing hatred. At this time, Mohamed Ali was becoming increasingly powerful and influential. When Ahmed Pasha assumed the throne, his rule was so oppressive and onerous that nearly 40,000 people converged on the judge's house to ask him to intercede on their behalf and to alleviate their oppression. *Al-Ahram* then cites Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Al-Jabarti's account: "All the people proceeded to Mohamed Ali and told him: We do not want this *Pasha* as ruler? They answered: We want none other than yourself in accordance with our conditions due to the qualities of justice and benevolence we perceive in you. At first Mohamed Ali refused, *but then he accepted.... This occurred in the* late afternoon and the city criers broadcast the news throughout the city that evening."

Al-Ahram resumes, "This marked the beginning of the history of modern Egypt and the brightest day of that happy century when Egypt, on 13 May 1805, acclaimed that great man as its governor. It is he who revived Egypt from stagnation and transformed it into a strong and powerful nation."

Encouraged by the promotion of the occasion in the country's newspapers, the general climate was charged with enthusiasm for the event, so much so that by 8 May the festivities committee had raised LE1,056. In view of the public's generosity, the ministers could no longer appear to be lagging behind. Heading the fourth and final subscription tally was the Prime Minister Mostafa Fahmi, who paid LE20. The other ministers naturally followed suit. By the end of the fund-raising campaign, the organisers had collected LE1,404.

At the same time, the organisers also envisioned means for the celebrations to raise money to cover expenses. For example, they decided to hold the main gala festivities in the Gezira park. Two entrance gates would be set up which would permit entry only to those who had purchased a 10-piastre ticket. "In the central square of the park overlooking the Nile there will be a large pavilion to receive guests of all classes. In its eastern portion there will be 100 box seats in tiers of six seats each. The *price for a box seat will be 200 piastres.* The purpose of this seating is to enable spectators to observe the procession of decorated boats and the fireworks display on the Nile."

This arrangement did not meet with *Al-Ahram*'s approval. The national celebration was an occasion for all to participate, it protested, and since the well-to-do had already donated on behalf of the poor, "it is not appropriate to exact fees from the people for something they already possess."

In spite of this small hitch, general enthusiasm was such that public opinion began to think in terms of extending the celebrations beyond Cairo in order to include Egypt's other major cities, notably Alexandria. *Al-Ahram* reported that the dignitaries of other major cities began preparations for the day. That Zaqaziq had already founded a local festivities committee was *interpreted by Al-Ahram as a good omen* that similar committees would be formed in other provincial capitals.

Back in Cairo, the festivities committee added the final touches to the programme *which included parades by school children*, fireworks displays, singing concerts and a parade of decorated boats on the Nile.

On 12 May, *Al-Ahram* announced that it would not appear the following day, "in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ascension of Mohamed Ali as governor of Egypt, a national day which all denominations and all private and public institutions will observe." It also announced that in addition to the decorations and festivities already mentioned, the facade and minaret of Al-Azhar Mosque would be decorated and prayers would be held at the same time in all the mosques, churches and synagogues.

The celebrations held on 13 May 1905 were, according to *Al-Ahram*'s reporters stationed throughout Cairo, "the grandest festivities ever held in the capital." From Ramses Square to Abdin, the streets were "decorated with flags, banners, lights and lanterns. Hotels, such as Shepherds and the Continental, banks such as the Ottoman, National and Real-Estate Banks, as well as private clubs, residences and stores, displayed festive banners and decorations. Also, two domed archways were set up at both ends of Abdin Street."

The procession of school students must have been an impressive sight. Each student carried a coloured lantern in one hand and an Egyptian flag in the other. Their procession was escorted by rows of infantrymen and mounted soldiers on either side.

In Gezira Square, the brightly lit pavilion "was filled with families, dignitaries and notables" while "a procession of festively decorated and lighted boats moved down the Nile emitting coloured smoke from their stacks. All the houseboats and other boats were decorated and on some of them musical bands played the most delightful tunes." After Ibrahim Bek Al-Halbawi inaugurated the evening celebrations in the pavilion with a speech in commemoration of Mohamed Ali, a 21-gun salute was sounded *from the Citadel. Then spectators* were treated to an impressive fireworks display, sweets and refreshments and a singing concert.

In Alexandria, festivities began in Al-Manshiyya Square where the governor of the city addressed the crowds. The occasion, however, was marred by "disturbances in the crowds who police treated *as though they were livestock, so much so* that many people were injured, including women and children."

In Zaqaziq, a parade of school children bearing a picture of Mohamed Ali was es*corted by police through the brightly* decorated streets "until they reached the stadium where local dignitaries and officials awaited them in a pavilion and where festivities continued until dawn."

Although the commemoration of Mohamed Ali was primarily a festive occasion, many took it as inspiration to offer edifying instruction in Egyptian history. *Al-Ahram* was among many to remind its readers of the history of the founder of modern Egypt. On 12 May its entire front page was devoted to an article entitled "The 100th anniversary of the ascension of Mohamed Ali Pasha as governor of Egypt". The article focused on that portion of Mohamed Ali's life which is often overlooked by historians — the period preceding his arrival in Egypt. "Mohamed Ali enlisted with the Ottoman army and quickly advanced within its *ranks until he became a quartermaster* sergeant by the age of 18. Before he came to Egypt he was blessed with three sons — Ibrahim, Tosun and Ismail — and two daughters. To fulfil his great ambitions for *advancement, he joined* the Ottoman regiment that was to go to Egypt in order to fight the French. In that campaign he led 300 fighters. As a result of the great valour and courage he displayed in the Battle of *Abu Qir, he was promoted to major* and soon his industry and ardour led to his assignment as commander of 4,000 soldiers."

Ibrahim Al-Halbawi, who delivered the inaugural speech in the Gezira pavilion, took the occasion to remind his audience of the progress Mohamed Ali brought to Egypt through his many construction enterprises. "He expanded the irrigation networks, built up national industries, built new cities and founded a national navy. He instituted a major land survey, built 62 schools of which 8 were for advanced studies in engineering, medicine, pharmachology, languages, accounting and agriculture. This is not to mention the educational *missions he dispatched* to Europe. He accomplished all this within the space of 45 years of rule after which he left Egypt without so much as a single piastre in debt."

Ahmed Bek Zaki, addressing the Geographical Society on 19 May, focused on Mohamed Ali's massive irrigation works, notably the Barrages (just north of Cairo), to regulate Nile waters for irrigation. "He *also dug the Mahmudiyya Canal restoring* life to Alexandria and he built a formidable dam at Abu Qir that was virtually a wonder of its age. He transformed the sand to fertile soil in Wadi Al-Tomeilat where he planted *trees and dug rivers* so that what was once barren wasteland bloomed to become a paradise containing every sort of fruit."

The centennial also provided occasion for many institutional proposals, including one for the establishment of a university.

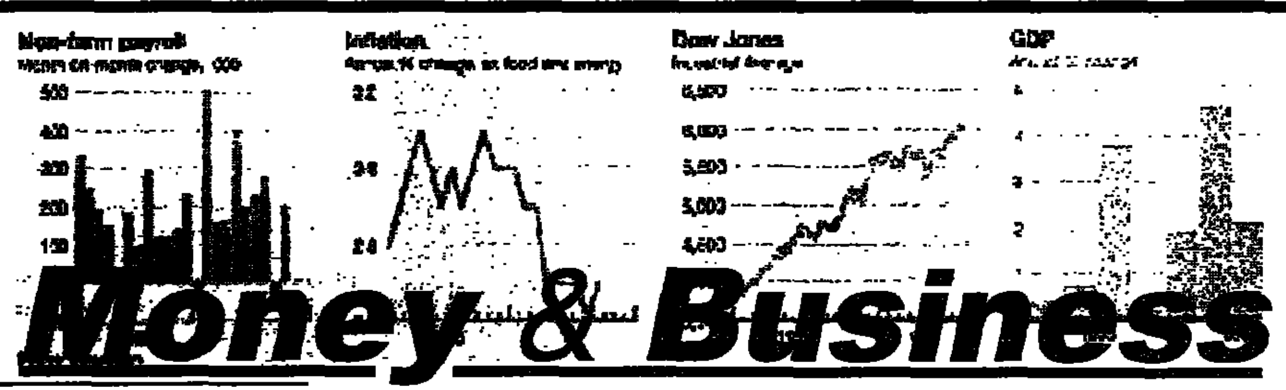
Indeed, the campaign to solicit donations for Egypt's first national university in Cairo began within the space of three years after the centennial celebrations. It was certainly to be a monument worthy of the occasion which gave it inspiration.


The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Bavarian delegation in Egypt

A HIGH-ranking Bavarian delegation arrived in Cairo to meet with Egyptian officials of the Ministry of Economy to review means of exchanging economic cooperation between Bavaria and Egypt.

The delegation is headed by the Bavarian economy minister and includes a number of executives of environmental protection companies' consulting firms, as well as a number of businessmen. The German ambassador to Egypt stated *that the number of German companies investing in Egypt is* increasing every year. This, he noted, indicates the confidence in Egypt's economic reform programme.



Oil companies not for sale

HAMDI El-Banbi, minister of petroleum, stated that the assets of public sector oil and petroleum companies will not be offered for privatisation because they cater for substantial *and strategic needs of local consumption. Companies such* as the National Petroleum Company fall into this category.

El-Banbi also noted that state-owned oil refineries will not be offered for privatisation.

Discussion of the privatisation issue with regards to oil and petroleum companies comes at a time when Egypt is seeking to double its natural gas production.

NBE invites small businessmen to take part in investment projects

IN LINE with the transition towards a market-driven economy that places great emphasis on the role of the private sector, the Egyptian *banking system* exerted determined efforts to foster the participation of businessmen in privatisation projects. Moreover, the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), being eager to cope with such breathtaking economic developments, has tailored *a strategy geared towards* holding training programmes in which specialised experts train about 150 businessmen in finance, management and marketing with a view to upgrading their skills and performance.

In this respect, the bank *grouped a number of new* businessmen via contacting NBE's eminent customers, governors of new cities, as well as businessmen's and investors' associations to nominate suitable figures for participating in such programmes. This is regarded *as a preliminary step* towards opening new vistas before promising businessmen and enhancing their participation in giant projects.

It is envisaged that major problems, such as credit guarantees, facing small businessmen will be discussed during the relevant conference due to be held in April. Moreover, it is expected that a declaration will be made in relation to trimming such guarantees to cope with the potentials of investors and be confined solely to the feasibility of the project.

This trend is complementary with NBE's programmes related to financing and supporting small-scale industries, such as the cooperation with the Social Development Fund to manage the finance of small-scale projects, and create new job opportunities. In this vein, NBE signed five contracts with the Social Fund for Development in May 1993, to a total amount of LE350 million. The said amount was extended by the bank in the form of easy-term loans to the owners of such projects. Accordingly, around 15,000 projects benefited from such loans which amounted to LE292 million at the end of 1996. Moreover, the bank has innovated a novel system for financing small and medium-scale projects, the total cost of each varying between LE500,000 and LE1 million, including the land and *the buildings*. However, such finance is extended in coordination with the Ministry of Industry and the Federation of Industries, *giving priority* to industries which create more job opportunities and operate in Upper Egypt.

GACC and Egyptian commercial development

EGYPT is gaining, in view of German business, an increasing industrial image and an appreciation as an important stand-alone market as well as a valuable foothold and gateway to the — albeit with difficulties and setbacks, but nevertheless finally emerging — Middle East market.

To help and increase the interest of German industry in the Egyptian market, to give reliable and competent information and consultation, to provide professional business services to its Egyptian and German members and clients has been, during the business year 1996, the main task of the German-Arab Chamber of Commerce (GACC).

Having reached a membership of more than 1,100 companies, 80 per cent of which are Egyptian companies or Egyptian-based companies, the GACC is proud to have among its members *important German companies which are major* players in Egyptian-German business.

The scope of the GACC's members range from trading companies, commercial agents, industrial companies as well as service companies. Although many of its members are key players in the Egyptian commercial market, the GACC is also and especially open for medium and small-sized companies.

In 1996 the GACC provided services for all these companies, keeping up its policy — like the policy of all German Chambers of Commerce abroad — to be a truly bilateral chamber and serving the economies of both the German as well as the Egyptian economies.

To promote Egypt in Germany, the GACC held Egyptian Days in several cities in Germany, the largest of which took place in Hamburg, Berlin, Düsseldorf and Munich. the GACC was also present at many Middle East seminars in Germany, whereby it joined forces in their presentation of the Machreq region with colleagues from *GACC offices in Beirut, Ramallah and Amman.*

As for major events in Egypt, the GACC organised regular business luncheons and dinners in 1996. As for guests from Egypt, the GACC has *been honoured by the ministers of finance*, environment and public business sector, economy, industry, electricity, presidential advisor Osama El-Baz, the head of the Investment Authority Dr Ibrahim Fawzi, in addition to guest speakers from Germany, such as environmentalist Dr von Weizäker and trade union chief Mr Briet.

In addition to this, the GACC held several seminars and workshops on important business topics, such as environmental management, international commercial arbitration, international contracting, and more.

In cooperation with the daughter-organisation of the GACC, *the Egyptian-European Association* for Economic and Social Development (EEA) held more than 200 days of training programmes and seminars in the field of business administration at the GACC's premises *in Cairo and Alexandria*.

Enumerating some of the major activities of last year, one should mention, that the major work of GACC staff — being now about 25 persons — consists of providing information and services to numerous daily visitors, answering written inquiries from Germany and intervening in business and contract disputes between our member companies.

As for the major focus of the forthcoming activities of the GACC, they will be focused on enhancing their capabilities and capacities to provide industrial and *technological* consultancy.

The GACC is confident that 1997 will see the light of a new vocational training project of member companies of the chamber in the framework of the Mubarak-Kohl Initiative.

Myth of the desert beast

Rumours of vicious attacks on villagers and urban dwellers have people terrified. But as Eman Abdel-Moeti discovers, these fears stem from desert phobia and legends of a hostile wasteland, and have led to the disappearance of several endangered species

It was almost midnight in the small village of Zuraikat in Qena, Upper Egypt, and Mohamed was rushing home after a hard day. It was dark, and he had to walk through some sugar cane fields to reach his house. Walking through deserted fields at night arouses trepidation in the bravest, but Mohamed is used to it. He was only halfway through the first field, however, when a beast suddenly leaped out of the darkness and attacked *him viciously*. In a few seconds, Mohamed was lying in the field with his arms and legs badly injured, and a battered shoulder. As the news about him spread through the village the next morning, more people were reported to have been attacked by the same animal. Although no one had seen it, the villagers all claimed that the animal was a hybrid of dog and wolf, called a 'Salawwa'. Seeking to protect their children and families, hundreds of villagers *went out to hunt down* all the animals in the village, including dogs and foxes. A family managed to kill the creature as it was attacking them; it turned out to be a stray dog with rabies.

A month later, another unknown beast appeared in Menoufiya in the Delta and attacked seven people, among them several children. The victims were bitten by the animal on the arms and legs; small children sustained the most injuries to the face. With the Qena incident still fresh in their minds, people panicked at the idea of a new 'Salawwa', emerging from the nearby desert to ravage the Nile Valley and attack its inhabitants. Officials in Menoufiya recruited volunteers to hunt down all the wild animals in the area. Finally, the animal was shot by a peasant as it was attacking him. Again, the dead animal was identified by the veterinarian *as a dog, not a wolf*.

The story of the dog-wolf is circulating like wildfire, however, assuming ever more fantastical proportions as it is repeated.

Fear of wild animals inhabiting the Western Desert has grown and, as the myth of the 'Salawwa' *man-eater acquired more terrifying* proportions, accounts of people being attacked by *an unknown beast in Qattamiya* began to spread last week. From this small neighbourhood, built for families who lost their homes in the 1992 earthquake, horrible stories developed about an unidentified creature and its vicious attacks on children younger than seven. One woman claimed to have killed the beast, but the attacks continued. Witnesses said they had seen a dog with yellow eyes and short hind legs.

As the city dwellers' fear of wild desert animals grew, a mass extermination campaign was launched. The municipality alone slaughtered 1,000 dogs, at the rate of 200 a day, as well as several foxes.

Fear of the desert itself is especially acute in the new cities, and among workers on projects in the Western Desert like the Toshki Canal. Claiming that wolves attacked them in their camps and stole their food and belongings, workers on the Toshki project hunted down foxes and other animals in the West desert. But the workers also killed gazelles and rare species of foxes.

Is this a case of desert phobia? Yes, agree biodiversity experts. Although zoologists interviewed about the events in Qena, Menoufiya and Qattamiya said the "wild beast" was in fact a dog with rabies, people continue to insist that the 'Salawwa' was responsible. So far, no expert has seen the animal that was shot in Qattamiya because the residents burned it after killing it. Continued attacks, however, suggest that several dogs with rabies are on the loose.

At any rate, "there is no such thing as a 'Salawwa'," reiterates Dr Essam El-Badri, head of the biodiversity department in the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). "Nor are there any wolves at all in Egypt. As for the jackals that used to exist in Egypt, thanks to unregulated hunting from the beginning of the century *until the '70s, they are now totally extinct.*" According to El-Badri, the past few months of *uncontrolled culling could have a serious impact* on many species of the Western Desert which *are almost extinct. Rare species of foxes that do* not attack human beings are killed every day by *panic-stricken people*. The Biodiversity Department is trying its best to protect what re*mains of the rare animals which once thrived in* Egypt. The desert was once the habitat of gazelles, foxes, cheetahs, and hyenas. With urban encroachment on the desert, but especially casual and uncontrolled hunting, however, these species are on the verge of disappearing altogether.

No matter what experts say, however, the belief that the Salawwa is a wolf-dog prevails. But as Dr Farouq Bahgat, head of the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, exclaims, dogs and wolves cannot mate: "How can they, when they are two opposite animals?" Bahgat argues: "Farmers use dogs to protect their animals, while wolves attack them." Nor do wolves or jackals attack human beings unless attacked first; they feed only on small animals and birds.

Ignorance kills: "In the hunt for the non-existent 'Salawwa', many foxes were shot although it is illegal to kill any type of fox under law 53 for 1966," says Mindi Bahaeddin, a biodiversity expert. "Nile Valley dwellers have an historic fear of the desert and its animals; that is why they do irrational things. They kill animals out of fear and because they don't know any better. They don't know that urban expansion is enough, in itself, to drive away desert animals."

Such hysteria not only jeopardises people's lives, as they tend to attack the animals even before these show any signs of aggressive behaviour, but haphazard hunting and mass killing can be very dangerous for the ecosystem as well.

According to Bahaeddin, Egyptians who live in the desert are familiar with indigenous species and know the crucial ecological role they play, but Nile Valley dwellers do not know that the animals they fear are harmless, especially the foxes.

Richard Hoath, a fellow of the Zoological Society in London *currently working as an English* Literature teacher at the American University in Cairo, says: "I can't think of any animal in Egypt that would attack a human being except *an animal with rabies, or a desert scorpion or a* snake, but definitely not a fox." He elaborates: "*As for the 'Salawwa', there is no animal* by that name, nor do hybrids of dog and wolf exist in Egypt."

Hoath has lived in Egypt and studied its wildlife for nine years and is considered an expert on Egyptian biodiversity. Hoath explains that foxes are curious animals and may gather around new settlements to examine them. They feed mainly on vegetation and prey on small animals, but they do not attack people.

As head of the EEAA's Biodiversity Department, El-Badri admits that he is responsible for increasing people's awareness of the destruction they are wreaking upon the desert and the new settlements. Bahaeddin suggests that a desert ethic should be developed, and people must be taught to appreciate wildlife instead of fearing it. "Wildlife in the Egyptian desert appears only at night," she says. "As new settlements are built in the desert bordering the cities, the animals will move elsewhere by themselves shortly afterwards. Until that happens, people must not kill them, especially since they are not harmful as many believe."

El-Badri notes that, as a preliminary step to ensure the survival of animals that are already protected by the law, especially foxes, the Biodiversity Department is expanding its natural protectorates and using them for educational purposes. "That way, we can explain to the children the importance of wildlife in the Egyptian desert, and teach them to appreciate and protect it rather than destroying it." Anyone who wants to organise a school visit to any natural protectorate, especially those surrounding Cairo and Greater Cairo, only need to phone El-Badri to inform him of the date of the visit. The visit is free for students.

El-Badri believes that animal phobia or hatred starts with children, who learn to torture cats and other small *animals that cannot defend* themselves without anyone telling them that this kind of behaviour is wrong. This cruelty is reproduced in adults, as evidenced by the mu*nicipality officials who lead mass killing cam*paigns against dogs and cats in Cairo. "If we *teach children, through the protectorates, to be* friends with harmless animals like the foxes, *there will be a generation we hope will protect* its environment," says El-Badri.

Bahaeddin also insists that Nile Valley dwellers should know how beneficial desert animals are to them: "Desert *animals keep the life cycle* balanced, and what is happening right now is a violation that will disturb this cycle."

The EEAA Biodiversity Department is currently working with the Ministry of Agriculture and zoologists to create awareness among Egyptians and change the predominant view of the desert as a barren wasteland. They are trying to show that the desert is a precious thing, one that we must not destroy.



A safe place

When I was a child, like all other children, I had entire faith in my parents. I believed they were in direct contact with the powers that ruled the universe or, more accurately, that they were those powers. They could change bad things into good ones according to their whim, and usually for my benefit. Much later, I discovered that this assessment did not completely conform to reality. Discovering my parents' limits shattered my entire world, in such a way that it was never to be mended. That, however, is another story.

I was born just before the war, my brother right in its middle. My earliest memories include the ominous sound of sirens in the middle of the night and the commotion that invariably followed, at least during the first few months of the air raids over Cairo. As soon as the sirens sounded, I was snatched out of my cot by my mother, bundled up and rushed to the basement of our house, where the rest of the family soon made their way.

When my brother was born, the drill changed. I was no longer accompanied to the shelter by my mother. My grandmother was entrusted with my safety, while my mother remained upstairs with the new baby. I did not trust my grandmother. *In my eyes*, she was definitely not endowed with the same powers as my parents, although to be honest, I did not give my father as much credit as my mother in the care department. He was not as attentive to my basic *needs and/or* as eager to instantly *satisfy them*. Down in the basement, he often ordered me to be silent when I whined for a drink of water. This, *for some unknown reason, led me* to believe that he, too, was afraid of the faint fracas which I perceived and had *come to associate with the necessity of rushing down*stairs at the most inconvenient times. No one had told me about a *war going on and consequently, for a long time, I believed that* those unpleasant noises were part of the nature of things. I re*member waking up sometimes and, disturbed by the unusual si*lence, thinking that the family had gone to the basement and forgotten me. *I felt* safe then, because *I knew that* my mother had stayed behind to protect us, my brother and I. The smell of mangoes, which my mother was in the habit of eating during the air raids, reassured me further. In later years, I always associated the fruit with a feeling of total security.

My mother was not only stronger than the bombs, she controlled disease as well, summoning the doctor with great authority and a great deal of insistence. Listening to the way she talked to him on the phone, I became convinced that we owned him and that his only function was to ensure our well-being. Had he not done so, my mother would have punished him in a very cruel way, I was sure. I lived through major crises caused by our childhood ailments in total ignorance of the dangers that had been averted. I did not believe in pain because it was always made better, and for a long time was completely protected from the terror children experience when first confronted with the concept of death. No one I knew died in our family and my mother only read me stories in which people lived happily ever after.

The natural elements were also ruled over by my mother. She arranged for us *not to suffer from climatic vagaries. Wherever* we went, we were always comfortably warm or cool as the cir*cumstances required and, in the summer in particular, she seemed* to have a special, authoritative relation with the sun; of all the *children I knew, we alone never suffered sun burns.* It is on the day of the red *khamasin*, however, that I became totally convinced of her extraordinary powers. On that day, a blanket of blood-red dust fell over Cairo, blocking the sun temporarily; the air was heavy and tickled our noses and throats. The maids were hollering that the world had come to an end. Some started praying aloud, while others ran about cackling, not unlike some chickens I had had a chance to observe one day, when a little boy I was playing with had entered a hen-house, disregarding specific instructions not to do so.

My mother remained superbly calm. "It is only the *khamasin*," she said. I had never heard the word before, but hearing my mother name the strange phenomenon was enough to make it controllable and, therefore, not to be feared. She shuttered all the windows and placed rolled-up wet towels at the bottom of all the doors. Soon the red dust was blocked out. The maids stopped acting crazily and helped her tuck blankets around the windows.

From the kitchen came a delicious smell of eucalyptus. My mother had put leaves to boil in several large pots. She made us all gargle with some *minty liquid* which soothed our throats. We drank herbal tea. She suggested that we play quiet games or read a good book until the "storm" was over. "When is it going to be over?" I asked. For a moment, the maids' announcement of the 'end of the *world*' had unsettled *me. Surely there was no such a* thing as the world ending. My mother would not allow it, I thought. I had wanted to tell the maids, but had *stopped myself*, thinking that maybe they did not have mothers like mine. "When *you wake up tomorrow, it will be a beautiful day," said my moth*er. Then she explained about the dust coming from the desert. *Although my experience* had only presented me with the yellowish sand on the road from Cairo to Alexandria, I immediately convinced *myself that it had been quite red, really*.

"Will the world ever end?" I blurted out timidly, hoping that *she would tell me* not to be stupid. After all, I had made a mistake and believed that the desert was covered with yellow sand; the maids could also be wrong. *Only my mother knew the truth*. "Don't be stupid," she promptly said. "The world will never come to an end. *It will always be lovely.*" *That night I slept hap*pily, dreaming of cherry-red deserts, which were far more appealing than yellow ones. The next day, the sun was shining. My mother, having stopped the bombs, had also managed to control the weather. *The world, I told* myself, was indeed a safe place.

Fayza Hassan

Going for the glitter





photos: Sherif Sonbol

GOLD, silver and precious stones confiscated by the Egyptian government were auctioned off recently in an historical setting. **Riham Mazen** sifted through the baubles.

Antique Arabian swords, two rare diamonds, and golden watches were among the 3,000kg, worth LE11 million, sold during the event.

"This gold was either not stamped according to Egyptian regulations, or was smuggled into the country," said Mahmoud Mansour, director of the Egyptian Authority for Standards and Measurements. "The pieces have to be sold in auctions and usually these are held once every two years."

The auction took place in Beit El-Qadi ("the judge's house"), an Ottoman-era palace in Gamaliyya, behind Al-Hussein. The auction was preceded by a week-long exhibition to allow the public to examine the collection.

Although everybody was welcome, most of the bidders were professional goldsmiths who took home pieces which they will almost certainly resell for a considerable profit.

"Prices were almost the same as market prices, but buying from the auction helps bring down my annual income taxes," said Khalil Labib Muawwad, a jeweler from El-Ayyat, south of Cairo.

Most of the bidders focused on imported jewelry confiscated as it was being smuggled into the country. The prices in the auction do not include the extra 66 per cent in taxes slapped onto imported items, according to general appraiser Yehia Abdel-Razek.

"The auction brought in seven million pounds," Abdel-Razek said. Two silver Arabian swords and a three-piece silver tea-set alone went for LE12,000.

Two diamonds were sold together for LE260,000. The smaller was three times more expensive than the other.

"With diamonds, it is not only the weight that counts, but cut, clarity and colour, too," said Youssef El-Demerdash, an expert. According to El-Demerdash, buying diamonds is a better investment than gold and other precious stones. "The price of diamonds may rise by 25 per cent within two years," he said.

Sufra Dayma

Chicken *pâtés*

Ingredients:

1 small chicken (boiled)
2 medium onions (grated)
2 cups chicken stock
1 cup cooked or canned mushrooms
5 tbsp. grated yellow cheese
4 tbsp. white flour
1 packet puff pastry
2 egg yolks (beaten)
4 tbsp. butter
Salt + pepper + allspice + cinnamon + nutmeg (grated)

Method:

Remove the chicken bones and cut the flesh into small pieces. In a cooking pan, fry gently the onions in butter, then add the mushrooms and the chicken pieces and stir. Add the flour, then pour the chicken stock gradually into the mixture whilst stirring. Season, cover and leave to cook over low heat until mixture thickens. Sprinkle some flour over a pastry board then flatten the pastry over it and cut it into squares. With a spoon, put some of the filling in the middle of each square, then sprinkle some cheese and fold each square from the four ends like an envelope. Butter an oven pan and arrange the *pâtés*, then brush them on top with the beaten yolks and bake in a preheated moderate oven for 15 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

Moushira Abdel Malek

Restaurant review

A sour olive

Nigel Ryan finds that little things make all the difference

Prestige has been around so long that one is inclined to forget about it, especially if you are not a Mohandessin habitué. I rarely find *sufficient reason to cross the river*, though filling this space necessitates the occasional fo*ray into the nether regions, which happened* this week. And once across the river, I re*membered Prestige*, somewhere I had not been for years.

Prestige really comprises two restaurants: one, a rather smart, pastel table-clothed, elaborately-folded-napkin kind of place, with "Prestige: Cairo's chic restaurant" em*blazoned across its bill head*; the other advertises itself much more modestly as a piz*zeria. Of two minds, I decided on the pizzeria*, if only because "Cairo's chic restaurant" was totally empty, while its more modest namesake had several tables full. Lunching alone is enough of a trial. In a deserted restaurant it can be positively desultory. In the evenings, though, both places are generally crowded.

The pizzeria is perhaps a little more Swiss than Italian — pine benches, pine counter, pine-clad columns, and neutrally painted, roughcast walls. You can sit outside, which in the summer is a blessing, and often the tables by the roadside are the only ones available. It is a popular place, and probably deservedly so.

The menu is extensive, concentrating on *pizza and pasta dishes, though with a seem*ingly wide variety of salads. I ordered *bisque de crevette*, followed by spaghetti *puttanesca*.

Prestige has always seemed a very professional operation, and perhaps it was a little perverse, in the pizzeria, not to order pizza. The *bisque de crevette*, when it arrived, which *took quite a time, though this is, I think, often* a positive sign, was really something else in disguise. A *perfectly competent*, even rather good, tomato and vegetable soup made by *someone who obviously knew what they were* doing, had had little bits of prawn added to it. And while it was far from unpleasant, it certainly didn't match its billing. A *bisque* is a *bisque, tomato soup is tomato soup, and that* is that.

The spaghetti *puttanesca* had an equally well-prepared tomato base, though it was *marred by the addition of overcured and pick*led olives and capers that tasted of little else but vinegar. The problem with this kind of dish is that it is really assembly-line cooking, *an assemblage of pre-packaged components*. To work, marketing needs to be done properly. It does not matter if the person actually doing the cooking is a genius, you cannot *make a silk purse out of a pig's ear*. And there is a certain variety of large green olive, pickled in a mixture of brine and vinegar, that really cannot be included in anything that you might want to taste of something else. But there it was, sliced up and lurking beneath the spaghetti.

Alas, in the end, the efforts of the kitchen all went a little askew. The soup could have been delicious, as could the spaghetti. Little *things got in the way. But even so, with a bill* for less than LE35, including an orange juice, it beats many of its competitors hands down.

Prestige, 43 Gezira El-Arab street, Mohandessin. Tel: 34 70 383

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

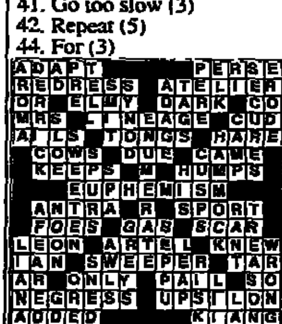
By Samia Abdennour

Across

1. Shatter; splash of colour (4)
4. Plan of land ownership (4)
9. Dais (5)
14. Bones forming upper part of pelvis (4)
15. French dream (4)
16. A shade of red (5)
17. Tear (3)
18. Cut (5)
19. Gathers (5)
20. Wounded (6)
22. Past (3)
24. Busy insect (3)
25. Weather directions (2)
26. Time (3)
27. Heavy metal (4)
29. Attractive (6)
32. Selfish (6)
36. Arab dress (3)
38. Verbal (4)
40. Species of wheat (5)
41. Go too slow (3)
42. Repeat (5)
44. For (3)
45. Proverb of common experience (5)
48. Mongolian language (4)
49. Dine (3)
50. Aged; tottering (6)
52. Hole excavated in earth (6)
55. Equipment; tools (4)
57. Obtained (3)
58. Musical note (2)
60. Cube of game of chance (3)
63. Billiards' rod (3)
64. Wandered (6)
66. Mass of cast metal (5)
68. Wand (5)
71. final (3)
72. Pit; 14 lb. (5)
73. A crystalline compound (4)
74. Slalom (4)
75. Watered garden (5)
76. Mail (4)
77. Male ant (4)

Down

1. Slow mournful song (5)
2. Sobriquet (5)
3. Drinks slowly (4)
4. Expression of pleasure (2)
5. Plunderer (8)
6. Bulgarian money 93)
7. Hail! (3)
8. Wide-brimmed felt hat (5)
9. A miser, characterised by Dickens (7)
10. Extremity (3)
11. Assad or Arafat (4)
12. Stare (4)
13. Otherwise (4)
18. Parched (4)
21. Of a female (3)
23. Initials of an exam necessary for foreign students to study in US (3)
28. ... *de plume* (3)
29. Heathen (5)
30. A trade allowance (4)
31. Private pleasure cruiser (5)
33. Incite (5)
34. Wheys (4)
35. Run (4)
36. Woe is me! (4)
37. Commanded (4)
39. Hawaiian roast pig (4)
43. By-pass encircling town (8)
46. Light two-wheeled one-horse carriage (3)
47. Chose (7)
51. ...-*de-vie* (3)
53. Middle of the day (4)
54. Greek letter (3)
56. Pictorial puzzle (5)
58. Receiver of stolen goods (5)
59. Small venomous snake (5)
60. Serving plate (4)
61. Prep. of direction (4)
62. Ids (4)
65. Vile; middle; signify (4)
67. Undivided (3)
69. 2.5 acres (3)
70. Number of Commandments (3)
74. Sun god (2)



Last week's solution

Al-Ahram Weekly

10 - 16 April 1997

Digging for dirt on the gold coast

Exotic fish, palm-lined beaches and a relaxed atmosphere attract visitors from all over the world to Dahab. Unfortunately, this beauty is mitigated by scenes of a less desireable nature, as **Shawn Thompson** discovers

Sitting under a palm tree, I drink a cup of tea and watch as the sky and the water change colours in the early morning light. The sun rises over the mountains of Saudi Arabia and casts light on the shimmering water of the Gulf of Aqaba and the mountains of Sinai. In front of me, Bedouins on camels stroll by on the beach. Another day begins in Dahab.

The seaside village has a unique combination of natural attractions, activities and cultures. This diversity has brought increasing numbers of visitors as well as dreams of success to Dahab, a small resort with worldly ambitions. Part of Dahab's growing popularity is due to the wide variety of recreation available. Naturally, the easy-going atmosphere is conducive to relaxing as well, and lounging on the beach under the date palms is a favourite way to spend time.

The Red Sea is justly famous for its underwater scenery, and few places in the world can compete with its beautiful and easily accessible coral reefs. Other-worldly scorpion fish, multi-coloured coral and iridescent wrasse dwell in the dark-blue water only a few metres from the shore. All the scuba diving or snorkelling one desires is just a short swim from the beach. The reef is so accessible that Anke Bierman from Holland remarked, "I am having such a nice time snorkelling that I have trouble finding the motivation to dive." Still, diving is a big attraction, as it is all along the Red Sea coast.

For windsurfers, the 260 windy days per year is paradise. In the lagoon, one can see swarms of colourful sails dart over the water. All the resorts cater to windsurfers, and a few shops rent and teach as well. In the summer, the wind is a cooling breeze that helps beat the heat.

Close by in Nuweiba, people have the chance to swim with the famous dolphin who recently had a baby. Karen Bruynooge, a teacher in Dahab, recently visited the dolphins and described the baby as wary of people at first. "Then its mother gently nudged him closer to the swimmers, as if to tell it that humans are all right," she said.

Besides water diversions, visitors can also range into the mountains which cradle Dahab. Camel treks and jeep safaris are readily available. A camel ride with a Bedouin guide to an oasis is a gorgeous change from the ocean environment. The buzz of Dahab is left behind and the silence of the desert mountains asserts itself. The Bedouins cook meals on the trek, and some are well-informed about the way of life and survival in the desert.

Dahab consists of three distinct areas. Beginning in the south by the lagoon is the recently-built Dahab City. With many new construction projects, Dahab City accommodates resort hotels, government offices and the bus station. A few kilometres north, along Dahab's bay, is Masbat. Smaller hotels, budget camps, restaurants and an Egyptian bazaar are located here. Merging into Masbat from the north is Assalah, the Bedouin village and residential area.

Like a line of stones in the sand, the restaurants of Dahab lie along the beach in Masbat. Each is slightly different in shape, appearance and ambiance, but the essence — the food — is all pretty much the same. Some stand out with good presentation or better-than-average cooking, but don't expect consistency. Still, the casual atmosphere with palm trees, carpets and cushions makes dining a relaxing experience. The fresh fish is a good bet anywhere, and a special treat is the breakfast pancakes filled with fruit and covered with honey or chocolate.

A variety of people are attracted to Dahab. "A cosmopolitan mix in such a small and casual place makes Dahab unique in the world," says Steve Herman, a resident writer. A number of Egyptians visit the seaside village, as well as Germans, Israelis and Italians.

The Bedouin community is not unaffected by Dahab's growth. Although many have been shunted aside in the economic competition by Egyptians, they still retain their claim to much of the land and to the area's date palms. Assalah has become a permanent Bedouin village, and many have traded their nomadic ways for a chance to reside and earn money in Dahab. "Their [the Bedouins] ability to assimilate while remaining distinctly Bedouin shows how strong their culture is," contends Hisham Khalil, a safari guide and chef.

Dahab has changed a lot over the years, but only recently has a spotlight of attention and money descended upon it. With the rise of tourism in Egypt, it has now garnered the notice of would-be developers, the government and vacationers from around the world.

Dahab faces challenges along its chosen path, but many hope that its appeal and potential will help overcome them. Among the issues affecting the area, environmental and health problems top the list.

Many of the concerns exist because Dahab's basic infrastructure has been neglected or overwhelmed in the race to cater to more and more tourists. The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) has not asserted itself, and without any cues from a higher authority, the local government has not adequately coped with the impact of Dahab's success. "Dahab is not the same as it was," says Mohamed Hassan, a camp owner in Masbat. "So many more people are coming to enjoy this special place."

Essential services such as garbage removal, recycling, waste water treatment, a safe and consistent supply of drinking water and health care need to be upgraded — or even just provided, in some cases. Other growth issues, such as responsible land development, usage of the sea, beach access and conservation of the palm trees also need to be settled. "The powers that be need to understand why people want to come to Dahab, and they need to ensure that they protect those reasons," says Steve Herman.

Due to the lack of waste removal services, people and establishments have taken to dumping their rubbish where they can. Unmanaged and unplanned, places like Wadi Connection and the desert plain behind Dahab have become de facto waste sites. Besides ruining the natural beauty of the area, this situation creates potentially severe health problems.

Health concerns are compounded in Dahab because of the poor services at the hospital. Yehia Kamal, general manager of Helnan Hotel resort says, "The hospital needs to be able to serve the international tourists." Doctors are available, but due to the physical remoteness of Dahab and the large number of tourists and workers in the area, the level of medical help available is inadequate. Locals, too, wish the situation was better and cheaper. Mohamed Khattab, a Masbat shopkeeper, had to have medicine sent by his family in Giza, and he had to wait until he travelled to Cairo to have work done on his teeth. "I wish I could take care of this now," he mumbled.

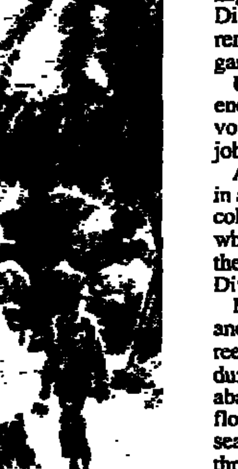
The rising number of tourists is primarily responsible for the increase in refuse and the hotel resorts have done little to contribute positively.

Dahab has no public recycling bins or rubbish bins. Garbage pits are essential and fences and nets needed to prevent such items as plastic bags from escaping in the wind. When Dahab was a smaller community, the amount of refuse was manageable. Now plastic water bottles, batteries and other imported items are common because of tourists' needs. The tourists bring in money as well as rubbish, but effective use of the money for maintenance and conservation is not happening.

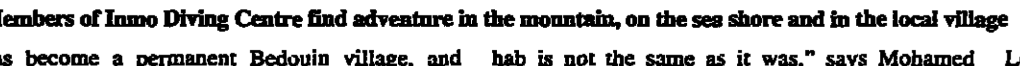
Transportation and access to Dahab has also been a concern that is, fortunately, being dealt with. Egyptian authorities are helping reduce the time spent travelling to Dahab by improving access — the construction of the new airport will help. Many people are counting on the airport for the future success of Dahab. Hotelier Kamal says, "The airport will allow Dahab to be number one [in tourism] in four years." The construction of a sprawling Hilton resort complex also attests to the faith in the future of Dahab.





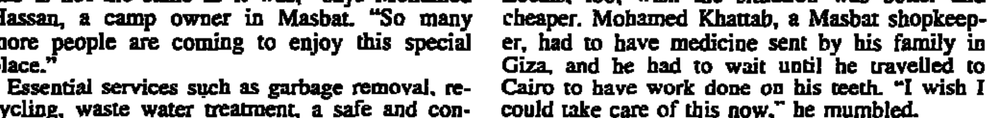






Members of Inmo Diving Centre find adventure in the mountain, on the sea shore and in the local village

photos: Sherif Sonbol



Dahab's gritty cleaners

Practice makes perfect. Volunteers have a brave go at cleaning Dahab's beaches, but the basic problem remains, **Sherine Nasr** investigates

Eighty volunteers from the Roteract Club, Cairo Divers and civic-minded locals took part in a renewed bid to clean up this scenic, but garbage-plagued town in Southern Sinai.

Unlike a previous attempt last September that ended in confusion and frustration, this time the volunteers showed a gritty determination to get the job done.

A participant in the campaign noted the difference in approach. "In previous cleanups, the garbage was collected but then the volunteers were at a loss where to dump it," said Shahir Kamel, president of the Giza Roteract and a board member of Cairo Divers, the two main organisers of the event.

In the last cleanup, Kamel explained, almost four and a half tons of garbage were collected from the reef and beaches. But, the lack of a designated dumping ground caused the garbage to be abandoned in the open long enough for the freak floods of last November to drive it back into the sea. "This time, we were determined to see the job through," said Kamel.

The participation of the Association for the Protection of the Environment, a non-governmental body involved in garbage recycling, added impetus to the effort. "Garbage was transfered to one of the various *wadis*, or valleys, surrounding Dahab, where four members of the team from Cairo sorted it out. It will later be transported to Cairo for recycling," said Nikki Priestley, environment coordinator for Hilton Resorts.

The ever-growing garbage problem in Dahab has drawn repeated criticism from Egyptians and foreigners alike. Filthy beaches, tourism experts agree, do not square up with Dahab's image as an up-and-coming tourist haven.

"We have to admit," said Sherif Ebeid, owner of Nesima Hotel and Diving Centre, "that because of this problem, Dahab attracts tourism of a poorer quality than that of Sharm El-Sheikh."

Tourism has brought relative prosperity to Dahab, a once sleepy Bedouin village, but it also brought an abundance of soft drink cans and plastic bottles, many of which end up lying about on the beach or, worse, rolling off into the sea. The existing system of garbage disposal is inadequate and the town's garbage often gets dumped in the *wadis* surrounding Dahab.

"What happened to Wadi Connection," said Kamal, "is a sad story. It used to be one of the most beautiful camping sites for tourists. Now it has turned into a dumping site," said Kamel.

Nesima Hotel owner Ebeid blames tour operators for the worsening of the problem. "Safari operators do not seem to care if their groups clean up before leaving the camping area."

Diving sites, divers complain, are the main victim of this unbridled littering. Plastic, a common garbage component in the area, is harmful to the reef and its dwellers. "It can suffocate the corals and drive the fish away," explained Ebeid. "Divers who are keen to protect their diving sites habitually collect as much garbage as they can during their dives," he added.

Cairo Divers volunteers began their two-day cleanup quest from the lighthouse area on the northern tip of Masbat, the town's main bay, where the problem is particularly acute because of the bay's concentration of seafront cafeterias. Then, they worked their way south, cleaning the Masbat waterfront and then the Lagoona Bay.

Prior to the event, brochures explaining the need to safeguard the reef and its marine life were distributed all over town. "Hotels, diving centres, cafeterias, locals as well as tourists all received brochures," said Kamel.

Rangers from the Ras Mohamed National Park took part in the cleanup, giving lectures and slide shows on marine life protection.

Total harvest: 35 kilos of plastic water bottles, 15 kilos of tin cans, five kilos of juice cartons, and six cases of glass bottles. A small haul, but a big step for a town striving to protect its image and livelihood.

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets *LE40* until 5pm, *LE45* thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions. Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has it All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.

http://intercoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.

http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5v/city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CD's besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayan.

http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5v is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

هكذا من الأصل

Victory despite adversity

Hand signals flying from the sidelines, Egypt's A team trounced the competition at the first Pan Arab Football Tournament for the mentally handicapped, reports **Abeer Anwar**



Cairo Stadium and Al-Ahli Club's indoor halls came alive from 29 March to 1 April as seven Arab football teams battled it out for first place during the first Pan Arab Football Tournament. It was, however, no ordinary match for the gold. The players, instead of the usual bevy of celebrated professionals, were groups of mentally handicapped children who were competing in the first such tournament in the Middle East and Africa.

After three days of intense competition, host country Egypt's A team was able to outscore teams from Palestine, Egypt's B team and Saudi Arabia to emerge with a total of six points and the gold. Coming in close second was Saudi Arabia with five points and the Palestinians pulled up the rear in third with four points. Egypt's B team came in last with one point.

With the teams divided into two groups according to their handicaps, this was a tournament where winning seemed to take second place to the thrill of competition, the level of which did the teams' respective countries proud, irrespective of their final standings.

In what proved to be matches played at an impressive level, the preliminaries and semi-final five-a-side matches were held at Cairo Stadium's indoor hall, while the finals were played at Al-Ahli Club. Instructions, normally screamed from the sidelines during the match, were issued through hand signals, given that many of the players were hearing-impaired or mute. Their handicaps, however, did not impede their ability to argue with the referees on controversial calls. A hand gesture, it was clear, can be more effective than a raised voice in expressing displeasure.

Although the Saudi team was sure that it would emerge victorious, the Egyptian A team quickly outshone them, scoring three goals to Saudi Arabia's one. "My team did their best," remarked Saudi coach, Mohamadi Farahat. "The Egyptian team, however, was luckier."

But according to the Egyptian team officials, luck had little to do with the outcome of the match. The team, which had been assembled just two months before the tournament, trained three times a day in order to hone their skills and be able to play effectively like a team, said Said Attia, head of the Egyptian team. "These players are very intelligent, witty and determined," said Attia, adding that they won because of their ability to function as a team and implement advice passed on from the sidelines.

The losing teams have other opportunities to test the Egyptians' strength. Another tournament for the mentally handicapped will be held in Palestine in July.



At the 1st Pan Arab Football Tournament for the mentally handicapped, it was the thrill of competition that ruled the day *photo: Amr Gamal*

A goal in any language

FOR four days, Al-Ahli Club's indoor hall played host to 16 teams representing 13 different language schools, all of whom were competing for the gold in the First Indoor Football Tournament for Schools.

The teams, explained Zakaria Nassef, former national team member, Ahli Club football star and head of the competition's organizing committee, were divided into four groups, and played a one-round league. The winners of these matches moved up to the semi-finals and then the finals.

The intense competition was heightened during the last day of the final matches, as buses loaded with cheering school children arrived. With the semi-finals being played first, the team from the Amoun school defeated those of the German school's team, 2-1 and Lycee trounced Gezira, 5-1.

In the competition for third place, the German school also managed to overcome the Gezira school squad, 5-3, on penalties. The spotlight, however, fell on the match between Amoun and Lycee. With drums pounding and whistles blowing, fans cheered on as Amoun squeaked by Lycee, 3-2 to capture the first place cup.

For individual performance, the Lycee Bab El-Luq's Bassem Mahmoud was named as Best Player; Manour House's Mohamed Mahgoub, Best Goalie and K. Ahmed also of the Lycee Bab El-Luq was the tournament's top scorer, with 11 goals.

Football fiasco

AT LEAST five supporters were killed and dozens injured in Nigeria when the crowd panicked after the World Cup qualifiers between Nigeria and Guinea on Saturday.

The problem began after security forces locked the stadium's main gate to enable local officials to leave before the public. The 50,000-strong crowd, unaware that the gate was locked, began pushing and shoving as they tried to leave the stadium. The ensuing panic resulted in scores being crushed or wounded.

Hendry snookered

WORLD snooker champion, Stephen Hendry, sustained an embarrassing defeat on Saturday during his last match of the British Open in Plymouth, England. Hendry's defeat comes just before he is to defend his world title later this month.

The left-handed Welshman, Mark Williams, crushed Hendry 9-2 to win the competition.

Hendry's usually-precise safety game could not contain the impressive potting game of Williams, who won the last eight frames after trailing 2-1. This win gives the Welshman his third title in the span of 15 months.

Hingis hits again

SWITZERLAND'S Martina Hingis stretched her unbeaten run this year to 30 matches on Saturday when she rallied to score a three-set victory over Holland's big-hitter, Brenda Schutz-McCarthy during the nearly $1 million World Tennis Association tournament in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The 16-year-old Hingis now faces a Sunday title showdown against former world number one, Monica Seles.

Yachting breeze

TEAM New Zealand easily breezed by Britain's Royal Dorset Yacht Club in the Mini-Americas Cup Regatta final in Auckland's Waitemata Harbour on Sunday, taking the best of seven races, 4-1.

When the race began on Sunday in the face of a 15-knot wind, Team New Zealand and Royal Dorset were tied with one win each from the previous races on Saturday.

Bingo, Bungu

THE INTERNATIONAL Boxing Federation Junior Featherweight Champion, Buyani Bungu of South Africa, retained his title Saturday night in Pretoria with a split decision over the US's Kennedy Mckinney in a rematch for the fight that earned him the crown.

The 30-year-old Bungu's eighth successful title defence raises his record to 32-2.

Golf gambit

PETER Teravainen slipped to a two-under-par 69 in the rain Sunday after three straight 67s, but still beat fellow American Todd Hamilton by two strokes in the Descente Classic Munsingwear Cup golf tournament in Japan.

The win was the 40-year-old Teravainen's second victory on the Japan PGA tour. He won the Japan Open last season.

Oxygen deprivation

A BRITISH climber who wants to scale tall mountains without using oxygen was headed last Sunday for the world's fourth tallest peak.

Alan Hinkes, a 42-year-old mountain guide from Yorkshire, plans to climb Mount Lhotse in Lukla, in the Everest region, by early next month. Hinkes plans to climb 14 mountains that are more than 8,000 metres (26,400 feet) high. He has already climbed eight of them in the last nine years.

Weah whacks Pharaohs

FOR EGYPT, George Weah seemed to be the insurmountable obstacle in the way of reaching the 1998 World Cup finals in France. The Liberian star, who plays for Italy's AC Milan, scored a second-half goal which all but shattered the Pharaoh's chances of making it to France next year.

Though playing under a new technical and administrative staff headed by the team's former manager Mahmoud El-Gohari, the Pharaohs continued the losing streak begun by the team's former coach Farouk Gaafar. Gaafar was recently forced to resign due to the team's dismal performance. El-Gohari was supposed to change all that. Having the distinction of being the first man in 56 years to lead the Egyptian team to the World Cup finals — in 1990 — Liberia's 1-0 win over the Pharaohs in the Group II qualifiers all but heralded the collapse of Egypt's dream to compete in the coming Cup finals.

Egypt's loss, however, was Tunisia's gain, placing the North African country in the Group II driving seat after it bettered Namibia in a 2-1 victory. The match, which was quite fierce, was unfortunately missed by many of the fans who arrived one hour late, unaware that they had to set their watches forward.

But for El-Gohari, the loss came as a crushing blow to his prestige. The man who was supposed to lead the team to the finals was hailed in the Arabic press as being responsible for the realisation of this dream now dashed.

Although public opinion may have swayed away from El-Gohari, Egypt still has a chance to qualify. To make it to the finals, the Pharaohs now face the unenviable task of winning the remaining three matches in order to have even a fighting chance of travelling to France as more than spectators.

Chessboard drama

Nashwa Abdel-Tawab attended Egypt's first international chess competition

It seems only appropriate that a land where pharaohs and kings reigned supreme for centuries upon centuries should finally host an international competition where the object of the game was to dethrone the king and manipulate the pawns. This is, after all, politics at its fairest play — a competition where the cunning stand opposite the shrewd and the one who can best balance his defensive forces with his offensive tactics will win. This is also the basis of chess — a war where the biggest casualties are one's ego and the purse that is up for grabs.

Politics aside, winning was what it was all about for the 54 Federation, International and Grand Masters from around the world who were participating in the 1st Annual Golden Cleopatra International Chess Festival. The tournament was a joint effort on the part of the Egyptian Chess Federation (ECF) and the Eastern Tobacco Company Sporting Club.

The championship, held over a period of 10 days, was divided into three tournaments: one open and two closed competitions. The open tournament, played according to the Swiss system of 10 rounds — one round per day, for a maximum of seven hours each — was open for all players, regardless of whether they were seeded or ranked. The other two competitions were played in a round-robin system, and was open only for International Masters (IM) or Grand Masters (GM). Egypt fielded 11 IMs in the competition.

The competitors, who travelled to Egypt from Hungary, the Ukraine, Germany, Austria, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, included only one woman, Eva Repkova Eid, a 21-year-old Grand Master who placed fourth in the open tournament. Eid, who hails from Slovakia but is representing Lebanon, won two matches and lost seven. A female GM rating is not quite as high as the men's GM rating. Eid, however, prefers the men's competition, and finds them to be more challenging than women's chess tournaments.

More than just a chance to host an international chess competition, the main aim of the tournament was to help Egyptian chess pros to gain valuable experience and reach the ranks of Grand Master. "Our aim is to have Egyptian GMs," said Hassan Mohsen, president of the ECF. "But since there are only two male Arab GMs, one from Morocco and the other from Tunisia, we wanted to give them a chance to beat foreign GMs on Arab soil."

Although Egypt has no GMs yet, its Federation Masters (FMs) performed at an exceptionally high level. During the open tournament, Egypt's Ibrahim Labib, an FM, won third place with seven points. The 20-year-old Labib attracted the attention of both the hushed crowds and the other competitors with his careful, aggressive strategy.

In the first closed tournament, while the Ukraine's Igor Novikov placed first with 8.5 points, Egypt's Youssef El-Ghazali took fourth. In the second closed tournament, the Ukraine again led the way as tournament top-seed Georgy Timoshinko, a GM who is ranked 2,510, lost a nearly four-hour-long game to Egypt's IM, Essam Naguib, ranked 2,340. In chess, unlike tennis, a higher number implies a better ranking. Naguib, who has been an IM for just one year, was the only Egyptian to defeat a GM in this tournament. Overall, he won six games, drew twice and lost three. And, try as he may, try as he might, Timoshinko couldn't figure out how he lost the fight.

Stellar week for squash

Barada reaches the semi-final in the British Open, and the Egyptian national junior team wins the African Championship. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports

Last week was one of gold with silver-lined clouds for Egypt's squash players. While former World Junior Champion Ahmed Barada placed fourth in the Super Series in England last week, he managed to make it to the semi-finals of the British Open this week before being knocked out of the running by World Squash Champion, Jenshir Khan.

Barada's first match at the British Open was against fellow teammate, Omar El-Brollossy. But when it comes to winning, national unity took second to Barada's 3-2 win over El-Brollossy. In the second round, he played a relatively easy match against Stephen Meads, defeating the Brit 3-0 and moving into the quarter-finals. Facing off against Australia's Dan Jenson, Barada almost had to prematurely book his ticket home, losing the first two games 14-15 and 12-15. Whether or not he was fueled by the cheers of Egyptian fans who had braved the dank British weather to support their countryman, Barada managed to do an about-face and win the next three games, 15-7, 15-9 and 15-12. To a great extent, a large part of the credit should probably go to his new training crew who, working behind the scenes, have been instrumental in moving the young champ up the professional ranks from number 16 to number seven in just over one month. With the outcome of the Super Series and the British Open, Barada's standing may now be third or fourth.

His stellar performance, even counting his match against Khan, whom he has yet to be able to defeat, has earned him tremendous accolades both in Egypt and around the world. Moreover, it has pushed the country's accomplishments in this sport to new heights, prompting Ibrahim Amin, the former head of the Egyptian Squash Federation (ESF) to state that Egypt is witnessing "its golden age in squash". While Barada has had a sizeable role in this, credit must also be given to his other teammates. Not capturing as much of the limelight, but still holding their own, Egypt's men's national junior squash team placed first in last week's African Squash Championship in Zimbabwe. The women's team finished second after a tug-of-war for the gold with a young, but strong, South African team. On the individual level, Rasha Hegazy took the silver, Mohamed Adel, also the silver and Wael El-Hindy, the bronze.

Although few countries participated in this competition, the performance of the Egyptian team should not be underestimated, said national junior team coach Abdel-Wahed Abdel-Aziz. The South African team, he added, is developing quickly into a force to be reckoned with.

The strong performances by the Egyptian players over the past two weeks were also instrumental in helping ESF manager, Mahmoud Barada, to secure the remainder of its budget from Sports Body representative Talaat Geneidi. With its coffers now full, the federation will be able to send the national senior teams to major future international competitions.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

photo: Randa Shaath

Anna Boghiguian:

The bare necessities

She is an artist, and so produces art. Is she brave? She would not say so herself. But you will remember her, again and again

What to make of Anna Boghiguian? In some sense the question hardly matters, since what one makes of a name is seldom what its owner does. But Anna Boghiguian is keen, at least, that it be spelled correctly and, in this simple matter, as in a great many other seemingly simple matters, she exhibits what might seem a disproportionate passion. Inaccuracy, evidently, is something that has caused problems in the past. Now, though, the signature has become important, not least because what Anna Boghiguian made of herself was to become an artist, and for artists — however vociferous their protestations to the contrary — names have mattered for as long as anyone cares to remember.

Her appearance can be startling. She is one of those people who make an impression, whom you remember meeting for the first time long after the meeting took place. Quite who was exhibiting at the Mashrabiya Gallery opening where I first met Anna has long since been forgotten. What I recall is the voice, excited at times, staccato almost, but never less than self-possessed, and this extraordinary figure who appeared to know everyone, strolling around, barking greetings. And everything was conducted at a volume made necessary by Anna's partial deafness and her propensity to lose her hearing aids.

The impression is made, and you ask, simply: Who is this woman? And it is only then that you realise, overpowering though that impression was, there are no clues in the packaging. On first meeting, Anna Boghiguian is impossible to place.

A few necessary details: her father was born in Abbasiya, her mother came to Egypt from Thessaloniki as a child. She insists, during our interview, that I include the fact that her father played two hands of bridge every day of his adult life except the day he died. That was in 1969.

Anna was born in 1946, in Heliopolis, exactly opposite the house in which her mother now resides. She attended the American College for Girls, on Ramsis Street, about which she purports to remember little beyond the missionary atmosphere, the constant singing of glorias, bunches of keys on chains around the waists of teachers and an inescapable odour of boiled cabbage. She then attended the American University in Cairo, where she studied economics and political science. Hardly the most auspicious training for an artist, though fortunately it was supplemented by art lessons, begun at the age of 14 with an Italian painter who was deaf and who communicated to his pupils via sign language which was then translated by his mistress, a figure constantly in attendance.

Then, in the late '60s, she met Fouad Kamal and became his pupil. And for the second time in the interview comes an injunction: "I want you to write that Fouad Kamal had the most elegant hands that I have ever seen, that they were elegant even when he was cutting vegetables. This is important. This was my first impression."

In 1970 Anna Boghiguian left for Canada and began work as a social worker, attached to the Montreal General Hospital, while at the same time enrolling in a fine arts course at the Sir George Williams University. In 1974, after graduating, she moved to Vancouver, this time working with the homeless and with alcoholics. She refers to this time as her "stint on skid row, a painful experience, an extended introduction to human desperation". Finally, when one of her clients was killed in an argument over drugs, she decided to quit, freely admitting that she could no longer cope.

In the meantime she had continued painting, simply, she says, as a matter of survival: "Placing lines on paper, colour, composing an image, these have always fascinated me. Painting is a metaphysical act, drawing an intellectual one. Without them I would not survive."

The implication, of course, is that her work is born of necessity, as important to her day and its getting through as two hands of bridge were to her father. She does not privilege either activity, merely stresses inevitability, starkly formulating the centrality of the making of art to her own life, making another of those seemingly simple statements about which she exhibits a necessary passion. In the cool, calculating, terminally sophisticated late 20th century, can people still say such things? Does anyone really go mad for art?

Only — and this is the crux — when it is real. See Anna Boghiguian's best work, listen to her speak, and it is not a healthy dose of cynicism that leads to a denial of necessity but a lack of understanding, a terminal failure to see.

Quitting her job proved a liberating experience, freeing her time, allowing her to devote more energy to painting and to a second obsession, travel. The latter had begun in 1966 when, at the suggestion of Georgette Savadis — Gogo — a Greek-Egyptian friend, she visited Athens and Istanbul. After she resigned, another friend drew Anna's attention to an advertisement in the local paper for someone willing to share the cost of a car trip to Guadalajara in Mexico, and off she went, getting out in Texas so as to visit another friend with whom she had travelled through Syria and Lebanon in 1968. She then continued to Mexico, heading for San Miguel de Allende, where she worked as an artist's model. And perhaps, here too, is another clue to character, for few activities require the kind of passive resilience demanded of artists' models, expected to hold a pose hour after hour after hour. It is the most discreet form of exhibitionism, and demands a constitution of granite.

San Miguel de Allende was to be her base for several months, the place to which she would return whenever she needed a bit more cash, modelling regularly in order to finance forays into rural Mexico. The next ten years, she says, passed quickly, punctuated by long trips to Spain, Czechoslovakia, extended sojourns in New York, until, finally, she left for London, continued to Athens, and then on to India before finally returning to Canada where she began to teach painting, sculpture and drawing on a foundation course. It was her first regular employment for a decade, the previous ten years having been financed by selling paintings.

It was in 1982, some twelve years after first leaving for Canada, that Anna Boghiguian returned to Cairo. Suddenly, she says, the city seemed very dusty.

"I felt uprooted, and have never been able to pick up the ropes to the past. I left Egypt two days before Nasser died. I heard of Sadat's assassination on the radio in Toronto. When I returned, I returned to a new place, not the one in which I had been brought up. The whole Sadat period remains a mystery to me. I don't know it. And when I came back even those people that I knew appeared to have changed, to seem different. Gogo had died. Fouad Kamal had died. And somewhere along the line, the city I thought I knew had died."

It was only in 1986 that she returned to Cairo with the intention of staying for any length of time. She rented a studio in Dokki and, after six months, exhibited with Ursula Schernig, before embarking on another journey to Yemen, India, Pakistan, returning to Cairo via Istanbul, then travelling overland through Syria and Jordan. Within four months she was off again, to Yemen and India again, and then to the Far East, eventually returning to exhibit work made on her travels at the Mashrabiya Gallery, after which she promptly left for Berlin.

After such an extended, peripatetic existence, does she feel rootless? The question evokes a degree of surprise.

"Rather than rootless, rooted, I think, in many places. It is just a question of your point of view. Borders, I mean national borders, have never been that important to me. Historical borders are more significant, and the boundaries between peoples, between cultures, of which there is too much ignorance. But crossing a national boundary, that is not really travel, it is simply a matter of going from A to B."

Once, during the course of a conversation, she described herself as "a lost Armenian", and from the tone there could be no mistaking that she was happy to be lost.

Throughout her travels Anna has kept pictorial records, books of pictures, because, she says, books allow more scope than individual paintings. Last year she produced a limited number of volumes containing images of scissors, pins and nails, gory in places, and as disturbing as *The Song of the Shirt*. Seemingly mundane objects, they are, nonetheless, the essential requisites for industrial, sweated labour. Currently she is working on an illustrated edition of selected poems by Constantine Cavafy, which will be produced, at the end of the summer, by Fata Morgana, France's leading publisher of artists' books. It has been a laborious process, hundreds of hand-coloured plates, no image the same, to be produced in a limited edition alongside French translations of the poems. It has been an ongoing process, a gradual distillation of what has at times seemed like a new obsession. En route, there has been an exhibition of work in progress at the Cavafy Museum in Alexandria, and a number of larger paintings on related themes. Initially, she was working on the project in France, but returned to Cairo after her mother was involved in a traffic accident. Once again she rented a studio — this time in Manial — and appears content to spend her time painting.

So is she here to stay? Unlikely, it seems, but the prospect of travelling just at the moment seems to hold less appeal than usual. And then there are the accidents, the work lost on trains, the books left on buses in remote corners of Nepal, the general wear and tear that such a nomadic life involves. These begin to take their toll. Work left in a gallery in Marseilles, a collection of paintings in Toronto, books in New York: it begins to be a little worrisome. And in truth her painting seems so peculiarly at home in Cairo. There is something in the configuration of the city, in its layers, in the dust and the light and the shadow, in the whole shaking, toppling heaped-up edifice, that exercises a continuing fascination. Few drawings capture the texture of the city as hers do, but then few artists are as willing to spurn the trappings of commercialism in favour of doing what artists are supposed to do — i.e. produce art — as she is.

Perhaps one need do no more than acknowledge the degree of courage involved in treading such an independent path, in functioning outside the scene, without security, though were I to suggest that she is somehow brave, she would simply laugh. Everyone, she insists, is brave. There are no other choices.

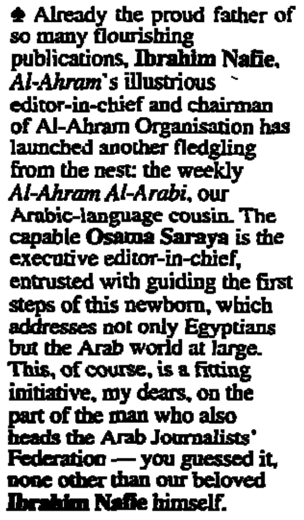
Does she make money? An eyebrow is raised in response: she survives, that is all, doing what she must do. For Anna Boghiguian there never really were a great many options. She smiles, and you smile too. What to make of Anna Boghiguian? The question really is redundant. You don't make anything at all. She does the making. And if the packaging tells you nothing, it is because she wants it that way. Everything important is in the work.

Profile by ***Nigel Ryan***

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♠ Already the proud father of so many flourishing publications, **Ibrahim Nafie**, *Al-Ahram*'s illustrious editor-in-chief and chairman of Al-Ahram Organisation has launched another fledgling from the nest: the weekly *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi*, our Arabic-language cousin. The capable **Osama Saraya** is the executive editor-in-chief, entrusted with guiding the first steps of this newborn, which addresses not only Egyptians but the Arab world at large. This, of course, is a fitting initiative, my dears, on the part of the man who also heads the Arab Journalists' Federation — you guessed it, none other than our beloved **Ibrahim Nafie** himself.





♣ Aren't you lucky, my ducklings, that I am back to entertain you with some snippets of witty wisdom. My artistic inclinations took me all the way to Amman, on the trail of my good friend **Gamil Shafiq**, whose exhibition at the Baladna Art Gallery opened to an enthusiastic public on 24 March, under the auspices of Her Royal Highness **Princess Rania Al-Abdallah**. The exhibition will last until 17 April, so if you haven't bought your ticket yet, find a friend with a private jet. As I was telling my friends **Soad El-Essawi**, the gallery's gracious owner, and **Hani Riad Ali**, our eminent ambassador in Amman, I had a good mind to extend my stay. Unfortunately, I ran out of the black and white oufits made especially to match the title of the exhibition. **Gamil**, however, has another exhibition opening in Beirut, at Qa'at Masrah Al-Madina, on 21 April, and at this event, he will only show watercolours. I dream of pastels — so kind to the complexion. Perhaps I will whip up a frothy fantasy in chiffon for the occasion — the better to disguise any unsightly protuberances brought on by excessive feasting. Those *mezzes*!





♥ Before I embarked on my quest for artistic satisfaction, however, I took time to celebrate an important date: the birthday of our layout editor, **Samir Sobhi**, a family affair which left me feeling like marshmallows. Samir is one of the most solid pillars of the *Weekly*, and seeing him turn 60 was quite momentous, really.

